

# HUMAN CAPITAL IMPLICATIONS OF RUSSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION CORRUPTION

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THESIS

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## **ABSTRACT**

Corruption in Russian higher education is a significant problem with serious implications for human capital formation and the achievement of a knowledge economy. Higher education is a fundamental source of human capital production for the Russian Federation. This function is realized by training students and objectively signaling graduates' future productive value. The Russian higher educational system has fundamentally changed since the end of the Soviet Union, expanding on a massive scale, introducing new policy directions and allowing private universities to open. Unfortunately, this expansion has been accompanied by an increase in higher educational corruption. Corruption is a complicated topic that will be defined as any voluntary behavior, including the abuse of trust or authority that harms or trivializes the legitimacy and effectiveness of an otherwise impartial institution or organization. This definition includes important aspects of corruption that are not commonly included in previous studies.

Russian higher education corruption is widespread and has roots in the Soviet Union. In its myriad forms, higher education corruption socializes corrupt behavior and undermines both the training and signaling functions of a university in human capital production. The first kind of corruption that can be encountered in a university is financial corruption. This is a prevalent problem, which involves the inappropriate use of university funds and facilities by administrators. Selection corruption is the most widely perceived problem with Russian higher education. This phenomenon is the securing of admissions for certain students due to bribery or the inappropriate use of influence. Another form of corruption is the selling of course grades or exam results - known as grading corruption. Accreditation corruption is the granting of professional credentials to doctors and lawyers in exchange for bribes or favors. Academic dishonesty is also a form of corruption, but it is supplied by almost exclusively by students and a function of poor policing by instructors. This is corrupt in the sense that it works in the same way as grading corruption, selection corruption and accreditation corruption, but the

responsibility lies with the non-authority. Diploma mills are comprehensively corrupt institutions that subvert all objective goals and functions of a university.

The socialization of corruption has many negative effects in terms of spreading corruption among new actors. However, the socialization of corruption may not be caused by higher educational corruption alone. Secondary education corruption, family life and ubiquitous Russian social corruption are all alternative sources of such behavior. These influences are significant, but higher education has a unique role that makes its influence worth special consideration. Spreading corruption has serious political, economic and social consequences for a nation. These range from institutional failure to squandered economic growth and regime instability. The loss of human capital due to a dysfunctional education system is significant in many ways, including brain drain, labor market distortions and the denial of human capital's economic benefits. These consequences render higher education corruption in the Russian Federation a prevalent and threatening phenomenon that could do serious damage to the nation.

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## **1.) INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1.) Research Focus**

Modern theories of economics and social science depend on a series of critical assumptions regarding the logically predictable foundations of the environments in which individuals live and act. The primary assumption is that these institutions do, in fact, function as they were intended to do. The police sincerely protect fellow citizens, the army defends the country, doctors heal the sick to the best of their abilities, civil servants work in the interests of their country and universities impartially educate students and verify their knowledge. Corruption calls into question all of these examples and makes the idea of approaching any social question in a scientific manner a fundamentally difficult endeavor. Corruption is often cited as being a drag on an economy, essentially a loss of effectiveness or an increase in transaction costs for those that take part. This explanation, however, misses some major implications of corruption.

Corruption is a loss of state effectiveness in the greatest degree, because the interests of the office or official in question become fundamentally subverted by the competing, personal interests of corrupt parties. This kind of subversion prevents the state apparatus from working effectively, and it also impedes the ability of others to depend on the state for necessary service. Considering the degree to which many critical services in the Russian Federation are socialized, the potential implications of corruption are much higher than simply increasing the costs of economic activity or resulting in consumer harm. The loss of critical services can put large sections of the population at serious physical risk due to

abandonment and deprivation, which can become even more serious due to the predatory behavior of some authorities.

In a traditional industrial economy, corruption can indeed make transaction costs more expensive and reduce the productivity of given institutions, but the costs for a modern, knowledge-based economy are more substantial. In order for human capital to be developed and realized, a series of institutions need to function together. Higher educational institutions need to provide necessary knowledge to students while fulfilling rudimentary signaling functions. Economic regulations need to allow for fair and smooth market entry as well as a legal system for protecting the rights of market participants and peaceful conflict resolution. Corruption defeats all of these purposes and renders the market closed and restricted in terms of reacting to consumer demand and allowing firm development.

The premiere model for economic growth, a knowledge economy, is dependent on knowledge transmission via higher education and the effective use of human capital. Whereas an industrial economy and democracy require a minimal level of education and literacy, an advanced, knowledge economy requires higher education. For those nations that lie on the edge of a developed economy or a developing economy, the term "transition economy" applies. These nations are most often represented as by Brazil, Russia, India and China. For these nations, resource wealth and large human resources provide the base for high-levels of growth, but not for the opportunity to finally emerge as a global economic leader in the knowledge economy. In this case, the Russian Federation poses an interesting test case to examine the underlying assumptions of how a transition to a developed, knowledge economy is accomplished. The creation of a knowledge economy does not rely on

a further expansion of physical capital, but on the use of higher education to develop knowledge resources in human capital. The degree to which this institution functions without corruption is essential in determining Russia's ability to achieve its goals and economic development.

### 1.2.) Research Question

The purpose of exploring this topic is to understand the implications of higher education corruption for the development of human capital for a knowledge-based economy. This is an issue of potentially great importance, but it has not been studied in great detail<sup>1</sup>. In order to best approach this question, it is essential to further define the area of this investigation. Due to its critical role in shaping human capital and a knowledge economy, higher education will be considered exclusively. Higher education will be defined as post-secondary education in pursuit of an academic degree, with either professional goals or future study as a goal upon completion of one's education. This question will be approached by examining the role of education in human capital production so as to best frame the implications. Then, Russian higher education system will be examined so as to determine the environment for this study. Next, the concept of corruption, a consistently contentious term, will be defined and applied to higher education. The individual types of higher education corruption will be defined and explored in terms of their mechanisms and implications. Then, the implications for corruption will be examined in detail, and any mitigating factors will be addressed. In order to achieve this, the research question must be precisely defined.

The goal of this thesis is to explore the implications of corruption in the Russian higher educational system from 2000-2010. A key aspect of this topic is its regional

character. Higher education, like many aspects of the Russian Federation, is a difficult topic to understand in terms of another country's expectations or traditions. In recent years, the institutional, political and cultural areas of many post-Soviet states have grown far from Moscow's control, with their own relative levels of corruption<sup>2</sup>. In fact, some states - such as Kyrgystan, Ukraine and Armenia - have since adopted substantially different policies since the fall of the Soviet Union, which contribute to a broad range of unique and unrelated national corruption levels<sup>3</sup>. The practice of treating Russia or any other country in the region as representative of all post-Soviet nations is no longer as effective a means of determining the nature of a specific social phenomenon in an individual country as it was in the 1990s.

A focus on the last ten years is essential to the design of this research project. The Soviet Union's higher educational system strongly differed from that of the present-day Russian Federation in many crucial ways. From specific political and cultural goals to fundamental differences in educational philosophy, the Soviet system of higher education cannot be truly compared to the system in modern Russia. The massive scale of institutional, social and economic changes from 1991 to 2000 produced a very unstable environment for both education and a labor market, described at times as "undeniable misery"<sup>4</sup>. This environment was characterized by extreme systemic shocks and uniquely unstable market conditions, where traditional educational value was not considered essential. The educational system was thus subject to immediate and unpredictable change. The educational system's major, patchwork restructuring prevented any system-wide evaluation of higher education as a whole until the results of such reforms could have time to develop and be observable. Even though some of these imbalances and difficulties persist, the educational environment has



stabilized sufficiently to allow for analysis to take place<sup>5</sup>. Even though corruption existed before the Putin era, the identification of corruption as a specific cause of educational weakness was exceptionally difficult, considering the overwhelming systemic weaknesses and disorganization of the time.

Another important factor to consider is the implications, or value, of a functioning higher educational system. Higher education corruption's implications are especially worthy of consideration, since its implications are potentially more serious than corruption in other areas<sup>6</sup>. Implications will not be analyzed numerically or quantitatively, because higher educational value often defies traditionally measurable economic indicators. They will be approached in terms of how higher educational corruption can cause the spread of corrupt behavior throughout a society. Furthermore, the implications of this paper will be conceptualized by identifying the value of functional, productive and non-corrupt human capital production with the corresponding potential loss to due to the absence of such a system. There are important qualities of education outside of these two roles that often defy many attempts at objective conceptualization and measurement, especially when questions of educational values are examined by a non-native member of the culture. To this end, the socialization of corruption and human capital formation are the primary implications to be examined.

## **2.) THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN HUMAN CAPITAL FORMATION**

### **2.1.) Human Capital Definitions and Its Role in Economic Growth**

Human capital, the productive value of human actors in an economy, has been the subject of numerous definitions, and a precise conceptualization is essential to answer this research question satisfactorily. Adam Smith's classical definition of human capital still carries great significance today. His original conception emphasizes the similarities between individuals at an early age, and then sees their later differences as a product of years of education and experience<sup>7 8</sup>. This theory was expanded on and refined by Schultz to be defined as a "variety of talents... acquired through different activities, such as education and work experience"<sup>9</sup>. In other definitions, there is some variation as to how durable acquired skills and traits are, and to the source of those very traits, but all converge on the value of such characteristics' economic outputs<sup>10</sup>. Another definition of human capital that is more specific to the modern economy will be examined: human capital is the value that workers add via their skills and knowledge, which are either acquired on the job or via education<sup>11</sup>. In other words, human capital is an economically significant resource that can function like any other economically valued unit of input but distinct in its inextricable relationship to an individual.

The value of human capital is realized in congruence with other forms and principles of capital. It is influenced by the same principles as any other type of economic value-carrying unit, such as investment, development, cost and returns. Therefore, it is possible to measure the value of an economy's workforce by looking at the skills and abilities of the individuals that make it up. In its most basic form, human capital is a measurement of human resources in a given economy, thereby making any human capital development strategies an

investment in human resource development<sup>12</sup>. Human capital development is dependent on the assumption that the capabilities of a given workforce are comparable to and complementary with other aspects of an economy<sup>13</sup>, such as industrial capacity or institutional strength. A comparison with industrial capital is not entirely representative, since modern human capital requirements are more often shown to define knowledge as synonymous with human capital<sup>14</sup>, not necessarily the ability to operate industrial processes. Overall, human capital behaves as any other special component of a functioning economy, being an essential component but not independently determinant of overall value. It is in this context that the consistent and classical valuation of human capital can be seen.

The classical form of human capital investment and returns via education are measured as an individual's time spent acquiring knowledge and skills versus unearned wages during the same time<sup>15 16</sup>. This rationale applies to individuals that seek to increase their labor market attractiveness by investing in their own ability to earn wages, thus deferring potential current earnings for greater wages later on<sup>17</sup>. When applied across an entire economy, multiple investors in human capital can raise the overall human capital level of a given economy in areas such as research and high-level specialization. Schultz's examination of human capital suggested that cultivating this particular economic quality would lead to long-term growth benefits for any economy that had high levels of human capital, which was later asserted by Denison in 1962 and Nafukho in 2004<sup>18</sup>. For the purposes of this examination, human capital contributions will be measured in several ways. First of all, human capital will be evaluated as a source of economic growth and as a contribution to the goal of attaining a "knowledge economy." Secondly, human capital will be considered in

terms of its ability to benefit institutional strength and its relationship to corruption. In order to apply higher education's nuanced corruption scheme to this topic, a detailed conception of human capital is necessary.

### **2.2.) The Role of Higher Education in Human Capital Development**

Education is seen as the traditional form of human capital development. A nation's overall levels of human capital quality are often directly related to the quality of its educational system<sup>19</sup>. Without education, certain essential labor market skills, such as literacy and numeracy, would not be guaranteed in a given workforce. These basic skills, however, do not present a complete picture of human capital<sup>20</sup> therefore an examination of advanced education is also essential. This relationship is important in the sense that higher education both produces new human capital and maintains existing human capital via cultivating and renewing existing specialists<sup>21</sup>. This need is seen in Russian firms' constant need to improve human capital levels, despite earlier investments, so as to be able to stay competitive<sup>22</sup>. Given the value of advanced training, it appears rational that the Russian Federation initiated a series of educational reforms for the specific purpose of increasing the national supply of human capital, beginning in the 1980s<sup>23</sup>. However, despite these reform efforts, Russia's human capital approach is still geared towards the industrial-worker model that was seen in the Soviet Union<sup>24</sup>. This kind of human capital production cannot aid a country in reaching the goal of being a modernized knowledge economy, which can only be achieved via a robust and effective higher education system. As the guarantor of human capital, higher education's specific role in this area of development requires a detailed examination.

The two essential components of human capital are knowledge and skill<sup>25</sup>.

Knowledge is a measure of potential human capital productivity. The other component of human capital, skill, is the practical application of one's ability, either directly via production or indirectly via organization. Knowledge is an excellent investment and means of advancing an economy, but without the skill of entrepreneurs, managers and technicians, knowledge cannot fully benefit the economy that commands it. Therefore, education and training are conceptualized as investments in the future production value of an economy<sup>26</sup>. Whereas knowledge could be considered a form of long-term investment, skills are a measure of immediate productive value. Given this kind of approach, knowledge can also be considered long-term, unrealized skills. Schooling is the standard method of knowledge transmission, which is then measured and acknowledged by achievement tests and academic degrees. The role of education in this kind of human capital development is significant. The two components of human capital value are mutually reinforcing and valuable in their own right, but in order to understand the role of higher education in human capital formation, skills and knowledge must be understood in terms of shaping the key actors in a human capital-driven economy via training, soft skills and signaling.

### 2.2.1.) Training

Human capital's two components are realized and measured differently, but they can be acquired in the same way - training. Whereas knowledge is transmitted via universities, skills are acquired almost exclusively at work via training and experience. Many students do not graduate with the necessary skills to function in the labor market, which leaves firms at a disadvantage<sup>27</sup> if they lack their own training programs. According to some estimates, almost

90% of professional skills and productive value are acquired on the job itself<sup>28</sup>. Being the guarantor of productive ability, greater importance is given to work experience over academic accomplishment in hiring for higher-level positions in both American and Russian firms<sup>29</sup>. In fact, according to a recent study of the Russian labor market, work experience is seen as slightly more important than a higher education<sup>30</sup>. This is so because the specialization inherent in many companies requires much more specified skills than the standard theoretical approach in Russian university curricula<sup>31</sup>. Labor market expectations such as punctuality, initiative, workplace discipline, communication protocols and business culture are often acquired on the job.

This is reflected in the finding that Russian students do not actualize the training that they receive in their universities, since only 13% of Russian students expect to work in their major of choice<sup>32</sup>. These expectations are often proven true, as most Russian students do not ultimately achieve a career in their area of university study<sup>33</sup> - thus obviating the profession-specific training role of higher educational institutions completely. This training disparity is often compensated by individual firms' training programs<sup>34</sup>. Such training programs can account for much of the human capital growth within a workforce<sup>35</sup>. This training is provided to both low level and high level workers as a means of better preparing them to meet their job's requirements<sup>36</sup>. The trend of private organizations supplying their own training is especially important in Russia<sup>37</sup>, since the ability of state institutions to provide high-level training was fundamentally undermined in the chaotic 1990s<sup>38</sup>. This situation makes for an unexpected situation for educators, whose formal instruction appears to have little value in the

workforce. Given this complication, it is important to examine what skills, if any, are instilled in students besides hard skills.

### 2.2.2.) Soft Skills

There are non-technical skills and characteristics, each products of education, that can determine an individual's human capital value. These skills, called "soft skills" include such characteristics as perseverance, resourcefulness, integrity, sociability and leadership skills. Higher education is an important part of developing soft skills in a student via personality development and interpersonal skill formation<sup>39</sup>. It could be argued that, considering the overwhelming importance of work experience in developing professional, "hard" skills, higher education's primary contribution to human capital training is actually fostering soft skills in graduates. In this sense, it is important to examine how and why soft skills are influenced by higher education.

Soft skills are influenced by higher education in several key ways. First of all, a university or other higher educational institution will influence a student's development in terms of behavioral conditioning. Some especially valuable soft skills, such as independence and self-reliance are developed by higher education institutions<sup>40</sup>. Universities educate students via socialization in many ways, especially in terms of fostering human capital<sup>41</sup>. The overall change in personal identity as a result of receiving a degree from a given institution also has a shaping effect on an individuals' behavior and values<sup>42</sup>. If, for example, professors are helpful and accommodating, then students may develop a more sympathetic view of authority figures and hierarchies. If, however, a student's efforts are regularly frustrated by an incapable organization or if a student perceives the institution in question as being a hindrance

to her personal advancement, then she may develop a much more confrontational or hostile attitude to future institutions. In terms of basic incentivization, a student may be conditioned to behave honestly, if such behavior is rewarded, or dishonestly if the opposite is true. This kind of institutional influence is important in the sense that it conditions future graduates to behave in ways that may allow them to damage society due to the amount of responsibility that they will have later in their careers. More than any other institution, education can influence the moral development of a nation's youth<sup>43</sup>.

The shaping value of higher educational institutions cannot be denied. Institutions are essential determinants in shaping future student behavior<sup>44</sup> and in terms of employment and individual career success. This kind of influence can be seen with the University of Michigan Law School's affirmative action program. Recently, the prestigious university's law school suffered widespread criticism for its policy of deliberately favoring students of traditionally underrepresented ethnicities in consideration for admissions. In order to better address a seemingly exclusive admissions policy, a study was conducted examining the career outcomes of students that benefited from this affirmative action policy. If, for instance, they were truly undeserving, then their career outcomes would reflect that via failures and career setbacks. However, upon greater examination, there was absolutely no difference in terms of career success<sup>45</sup> between affirmative action students and other graduates. Minority students, possessing apparently lower levels of academic ability as represented by their test scores and transcripts upon admission, were competing equally and effectively with their non-minority peers in the workplace. Therefore, if the measurements of academic ability for incoming law students can serve as a reliable indicator of ability, then either the institution must have



shaped its graduates to such a degree that initial differences were removed by the unique education and opportunities provided by this institution, or all necessary skills were acquired in the market as a result of favorable signaling.

In terms of the shaping effect of the institution, this type of experiment can find parallels in Russia. Russian students were found to have markedly pro-Western mentalities upon entering a university, but this would be substantially reduced in scale by the time a student graduated<sup>46</sup>. In essence, the longer a Russian student stays in the higher educational system, the more their values come to resemble those that are considered to conform with national characteristics<sup>47</sup>. Therefore, an institution of higher education can play a decisive role in both establishing a career and shaping students' later behavior. This conclusion, however, must be better supported and tuned to the specifics of the Russian higher educational system in order to be considered applicable.

Russian institutions of higher education also play an important role in shaping the soft skills and career outcomes of their students. In terms of career prospects, the traditional university powerhouses of the Russian Federation appear at the top - MGU (Moscow State University) - Lomonosov, SPbGU (Saint Petersburg State University), Baumann, and so forth<sup>48</sup>. An interesting recent development in this area is the appearance of a new source of career prospects - the FSB Academy in Moscow<sup>49</sup>. Graduation from these universities provides a student the best possible job opportunities<sup>50</sup> outside of being granted one by a relative or an acquaintance. Provided that having connections isn't a ubiquitous trait for students of such universities, it can be argued that entering students are, in fact, shaped by the environment in which they study, for better or worse. For many, in fact often for the most

academically talented students from outside Moscow and Saint Petersburg, having connections in major government structures and businesses upon entering a university cannot be expected. Now, the means of institutional change for individuals in both Russia and the American examples may be different, but the overall conclusion remains the same - students' futures and ability to succeed in the labor force is shaped by their higher educational institutions to a significant degree. If, however, this is not a solely function of soft skills, then the inherent value of the university degree must play a role.

### 2.2.3.) Signaling and Elite Renewal

Higher Education plays a key role in not only shaping labor market candidates, but also in signaling the value of graduates. This kind of process is accomplished via signaling, an objective evaluation of the societal value of graduates, relative to a university's prestige and evaluation criteria<sup>51</sup>. One's workforce determines productivity, but higher education determines a candidate's teachability<sup>52</sup>. There are several ways that universities of all kinds are able to signal the overall human capital value of their graduates. Degree granting, grades and specialty selection provide a supposedly impartial guarantee of the successful transfer of knowledge and skills to students, thereby assuring that each graduate has a standard value. This kind of valuation, also known as credentialism for elite renewal, can incentivize corruption<sup>53</sup>. On the other hand, this signaling function is very valuable for firms in the modern labor market when it's properly functioning, because higher education valuation is considered to be an essential part of the overall human resources strategies of many companies<sup>54</sup>. This signaling effect can retroactively produce effective training for those that benefit. By gaining access to the best employment opportunities or a higher ability to learn,

the organizational training that's afforded would theoretically be more effective as well. This kind of effect could qualify signaling as a kind of "calibrating" for human capital that best designates and adapts individual actors for future training. Despite this valuable function, higher education must provide some skill formation services. If signaling is the only primary product of higher education, then it does not actually contribute to human capital development<sup>55</sup>.

Signaling is a key part of the value of higher education, especially in terms of elite renewal. In fact, the perpetuation and regeneration of Russian society is dependent on higher education in most areas<sup>56</sup>. This ensures regular elite renewal on a seemingly meritocratic basis. This is reflected in opinions of elites' capabilities as related to the prestige of their educational background<sup>57</sup>. In fact, a popular means for elites to effectively distinguish themselves from their peers is the attainment of doctoral degrees<sup>58</sup>. Business elites have begun to educate their children overseas so as to avoid stigma and ensure a higher quality education than what the Russian market provides<sup>59</sup>. Therefore, Russian higher education's signaling and training role may be mitigated for private sector elites, but it is still the primary choice for governmental elites and bureaucrats<sup>60</sup>. After all, elite universities should select the most capable candidates and then transform them into the best qualified specialists. This is reinforced by the Michigan case, in which it could be possible that the performance of student is enhanced by the institution or that the graduate's signaling advantage gives them the ability to acquire the best skills at the workplace. Therefore, through signaling, training and productivity increases are achieved, albeit indirectly. Since the value of human capital is

highly dependent on the system that produces it<sup>61</sup>, it is important to examine potentially influential characteristics of Russian higher education.

### **3.) ESSENTIAL FEATURES OF THE RUSSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM**

#### **3.1.) Primary Features of Russian Higher Education**

##### **3.1.1.) Statistical Data**

The Russian Federation has one of the largest and most accessible higher education systems in the world. More Russian students are flocking to universities than ever before<sup>62</sup>, even more per capita than for the entire Soviet Union<sup>63</sup>. Even with these record setting levels, the number of students entering institutions of higher education has continued to increase in recent years<sup>64</sup>. Russia now has one of the highest percentages of its population enrolled in higher education per capita<sup>65</sup>, even more than France, Germany and the UK<sup>66</sup>, representing 620 students per 100,000 citizens<sup>67</sup>. Ph.D candidates have also grown by 100% from 1995 to 2004<sup>68</sup>. This sudden growth could have been prompted by a recent change in beliefs about higher education now being more accessible to the masses than in the past<sup>69</sup>. Another possible explanation for this increase is that more Russian families are able to financially support a student family member who does not work<sup>70</sup>. To meet this demand, the number of Russian higher educational institutions has mushroomed to incredible levels, with nearly 1,400 functioning today<sup>71</sup>. Along with this trend, many private higher education institutions have been opened<sup>72</sup>, but suffer from second-class status<sup>73</sup>.

Despite this encouraging trend of increased interest in higher education, the overall level of higher education quality has dropped as a result<sup>74 75</sup>. In this regard, the Russian government has taken the initiative to close many poorly performing universities and colleges<sup>76 77</sup>. Another important part of the Russian higher education system is the fact that it has traditionally been exclusively state-controlled and free. During the Soviet Union, all

university education was free to those that were selected for enrollment, and this guarantee continues today for state institutions. Private institutions can provide free education in special cases, but this is not expected. The constitution of the Russian Federation guarantees free higher education to all Russian citizens, even though a law was introduced in 2004 that allowed for tuition-paying enrollment as well. This kind of system and its historic roles have greatly shaped modern higher education.

### 3.1.2.) Structural Features

Russian higher education is thoroughly traditional in several key ways, including determining curricula, the selection of students and the rigidly hierarchical organization of individual universities. Most decision making in higher educational institutions occurs within a clearly defined and one-way hierarchy<sup>78</sup>. This is mirrored in the national system, since the federal government in Russia is the primary guarantor of higher educational standards and curricula<sup>79</sup>. Since the standard Russian university is public and exists on subsidies, its official ability to function independently from the state is very low. Any reform or change in Russian higher education policy must come from above, which greatly limits the academic flexibility and independence for Russian institutions that has become so prized by their Western counterparts. In some situations, this rigid control over curricula prevents the realization of important curriculum reforms<sup>80</sup>.

Despite this hierarchy, centralized control has allowed for the government to unilaterally overcome institutional inertia so as to pass key reforms, such as the Unified State Exam - the EGE - to reform traditional selection processes<sup>81</sup>. The selection of Russian students occurred in a very impractical way until this new exam was fully realized in 2010.

This system, a holdover of the Soviet era<sup>82</sup>, required students to physically travel to a university, where they take an entrance exam at a set time, which is administered by the university that they hope to attend, over a period of time up to one week. Then, following the grading of their exams and the determination of their admissions status, the students were informed of the decision. By entering via university exams a student then proceeded to study for free and received a minute stipend from the state for living expenses<sup>83</sup>. Aside from greatly restricting the breadth of choices available to students, this system put substantial financial strains on aspiring students, since they often would need to travel to and live in a capital city for a given period of time while taking the exam and awaiting its result<sup>84</sup>. This economic burden priced out many potential students from less affluent Russian provinces. Despite the persistence of such traditions, new developments in the Russian higher education environment have reshaped some fundamental aspects of the Soviet higher educational system.

Despite its state-centered history, some actors in the modern Russian higher educational system operate very close to market-driven entities. For many in the field, Russian universities are increasingly viewed less as a state entity than a for-profit service provider<sup>85</sup>, which reflects an overall trend of university commercialization<sup>86</sup>. First of all, many Russian universities instituted tuition-based enrollment in order to raise funds in the 1990s<sup>87</sup>, which began in earnest in 1992<sup>88</sup>. These tuition levels vary with the demand of the university, reaching as much as 250,000-300,000 RUR (\$10,000-12,000 at 25 RUR per dollar) for Moscow State University and the Higher School of Economics<sup>89</sup>. Despite these high prices, only the most elite universities have restrictive tuition rates, and only 5% of

Russian students have student loans<sup>90</sup>. In today's Russia, at least half and as many as two thirds of all students in state higher education institutions study on a tuition basis<sup>91 92</sup>. In private universities, this number was estimated to be nearly eighty percent in 2005<sup>93</sup>. Despite this trend, a large majority of Russian students would of course prefer to study as a free student than as one who pays tuition<sup>94</sup> due both to cost and to the corresponding loss of prestige associated with having to pay for one's education<sup>95</sup>. Along with initiating tuition programs, many Russian universities had to take on active market-based policies to survive in light of the sudden absence of state support in this same period<sup>96</sup>. One side effect of these new policies is the increasing influence of local businesses and elites, who have emerged as major sources of funding<sup>97</sup>. Russian universities change enrollment limits and majors depending on student demand<sup>98</sup>. This new market view has been accompanied with an entrepreneurial trend of opening universities as profit-making opportunities. Despite this major expansion of the educational market, the labor market for educational professionals has not experienced similar growth. There is a severe shortage of teachers and professors in the Russian Federation, which does not allow for institutional or professional renewal<sup>99</sup>. This transition to a system with market characteristics has been met with opposition in both professional and public spheres<sup>100</sup>.

### **3.2.) Primary Features of Russian Higher Education**

An important characteristic of the current Russian higher educational environment is private universities. In the Russian Federation in 2008, there were 700 state institutions, but 650 private ones<sup>101</sup>. However, private universities are actually substantially similar to state universities in many regards. First of all, even though private universities are theoretically



more independent than state universities, they still must meet the same accreditation criteria as their publicly funded peers<sup>102</sup>. This accreditation process is often much more severe for private universities, due to ingrained establishment opposition to non-state institutions<sup>103 104</sup>. The federal government also does not support research in private universities<sup>105</sup>. In fact, private universities compete for budget-subsidized student positions from the state, whereas these places are much more secure for public universities. Despite the ability to charge tuition, the state subsidy for a free student position is actually significantly higher than an equivalent tuition amount, which means that state-supported students paradoxically subsidize a university's tuition-paying students instead of the other way around<sup>106</sup>. This is exacerbated by the fact that private Russian universities do not have endowments like their Western counterparts<sup>107</sup>. Despite the similarities and overlapping interests of state and private universities, there are several key ways in which they differ from established state institutions.

Private universities are criticized more strongly than non-private universities, however they show more flexible and adaptable tendencies than those in the public sector. A major way that private higher educational institutions do differ from their state-run peers is that they suffer from a social stigma of not being as venerable as state universities<sup>108</sup>. In fact, media coverage consistently emphasizes the superiority of state degrees, and despite any additional accreditation, private universities are always depicted as inferior<sup>109</sup>. The best and most talented students always strive to enter a prestigious state university; the worst are always perceived to enroll in private universities<sup>110</sup>. This generally negative opinion of private universities is not helped by periodic of professional misconduct and the lack of educational standards in private universities<sup>111</sup>. One important aspect of private universities is that they

are being created by private interests in order to meet the challenges posed by the existing higher education system<sup>112</sup>. Problems such as producing unqualified graduates have been attributed to dysfunctional institutional legacies, which should be addressed by creating new and unburdened universities<sup>113</sup>, which may have more resources than their state-run peers<sup>114</sup>. This trend may actually lead to the production of more influential and successful graduates who could then effectively compete with public-university students, leading to some incremental competition among higher education institutions as a whole<sup>115</sup>. In fact, the negative reputation of private universities may not be justified in the sense that these institutions can provide better instruction in some cases<sup>116</sup>.

Overall, however, despite their diversification of the educational environment, private universities' role may not make a substantial difference in overall reform efforts. The ability of private higher educational institutions to reform the overall educational environment is in serious doubt. First of all, the institutional environment is highly unfavorable to private universities. This is reflected in institutional policies that rigidly enforce employment requirements for academic professionals that only allow for large-scale private universities to function<sup>117</sup>. Authorities also do not have much tolerance for an outside type of private educator, since they often look on business professionals and non-academics with great suspicion when considering accreditation issues<sup>118</sup>. Unfortunately, private higher education seems to be just as corrupt as state-run institutions<sup>119</sup>, often using identical techniques of bribery and rent seeking<sup>120</sup>. For some Russian students, once education has been characterized by a financial transaction, education is seen as more of a corrupt, commercial exchange than a learning environment<sup>121</sup>. These unfortunate trends serve to prevent the

realization of many potential benefits that private institutions might have provided because of their position outside of corrupt legacies. Finally, since the state is still the primary arbiter of educational standards and accreditation, private universities are approved based on how much they conform to state-run universities' policies<sup>122</sup>. This potentially stifles the development of private institutions and ensures that the primary actor in both state and private higher education in the same<sup>123</sup>.

### **3.3.) Primary Features of Russian Higher Education**

Higher education is highly valued in the Russian Federation. 93.5% Russian students see higher education as either important or extremely important<sup>124</sup>. According to surveys of recent students, there are many reasons to obtain a degree, but there is convergence in two areas - employment and prestige. At the moment, the prestige of higher education in Russia is extremely high<sup>125</sup>. Russian students overwhelmingly believe that higher education will increase their social status, and they hope that it will increase their future earnings<sup>126</sup>. Some Russian students see higher education as a means of getting a desirable job and of being professionally successful, not necessarily achieving high earnings<sup>127</sup>. Regardless of their individual definition of success, the idea of being successful is key to a Russian student's identity<sup>128</sup>. Since students are required to choose their major at the very beginning of their tertiary education, there is no real room for exploring other interests at a university, and there are certainly no officially "undeclared" undergraduates at most Russian universities. This particular social environment that surrounds the choice to pursue advanced education has several interesting implications for both human capital and the value of Russian higher education in general.

Standard human capital theory's rationalization of time investment does not apply to Russian students, and it should not be considered in the overall analysis of higher education's influence on Russian human capital. The standard conception of human capital development is the ultimate value of time invested in education for the purpose of increasing future wages, versus potential wages lost from unrealized work opportunities during this time. This kind of logic seems entirely rational, but it falls victim to many assumptions that do not apply in the Russian educational environment. Even though many Russians are primarily oriented towards material well-being and look to education to increase their future wages, the primary reason that Russians enter a university is for social status and social advancement<sup>129</sup>, which cannot be properly quantified with the traditional model. Even a consideration of social status as the accumulation of economically valuable social capital in the form of prestige does not fit, because Russian social status cannot be directly translated into conventional definitions of social capital. Despite the similarity to social capital of Russian notions of *blat* and *svyaz*<sup>130</sup>, their competitive and exclusive nature prevents their consideration as social capital. Aside from the inapplicability of economic analyses, there are other conceptual barriers to the blanket application of classic human capital investment theory. In fact, the primary reasons that many Russians seek a doctoral dissertation are as a way to distinguish oneself via academic prestige<sup>131</sup> and to better qualify oneself in an uncertain labor market<sup>132</sup>. In this same direction, the primary reasons that Russians choose a profession are not related to market factors, but personal preferences and social considerations<sup>133</sup>.

Furthermore, it is not entirely clear who the source of a decision to pursue higher education is. Russian students are not the primary actor in determining their academic future,

and thereby cannot be considered to be the source of a rational decision in investing in their own human capital. For most Russian students, teachers and parents play a decisive role in determining majors and higher educational institutions<sup>134 135</sup> or to attend a university altogether<sup>136</sup>. Parents can determine the institution that their children attend via both direct pressure and control of finances used for support while studying<sup>137</sup>. This kind of behavior can be explained by the view that some families have of higher education as a long-term family investment<sup>138</sup> and a ticket to middle class status<sup>139</sup>. Many Russian families, despite not meeting the standard, time-dependent definition of human capital investment, still invest based on other market considerations. The investment required in tutors and other preparation to earn a free spot is often equal to or greater than the cost of a college education itself<sup>140</sup>. Unfortunately, tutors often take on the role a broker of corrupt access, which is seen to disadvantage many poorer students that cannot afford to engage in indirect bribery<sup>141</sup>. Although many students work almost full time in order to fund their education independent of their parents<sup>142</sup>, a very large proportion of Russian students cannot make decisions about their professional development independently or reliably.

The lack of clear information and a predictable labor market also preclude any rational decision making by Russian students seeking higher education. A degree is considered essential to getting any job in Russia<sup>143 144</sup>, but Russian students often do not have an accurate conception of the modern labor market, nor do they apparently choose professions based on wages alone<sup>145</sup>. If they did make earnings-based career decisions, it is not represented in their choices of higher education<sup>146</sup>. Russian students still choose educational specialties that will certainly have no positive impact on their later ability to earn wages<sup>147</sup>.

Low paying occupations such as engineer, professor, engineer, and researcher, continue to attract thousands of candidates every year. However the academic specialties required to work in these fields remain the least popular<sup>148</sup>. The goal of becoming a teacher or professor, for example, apparently cannot fulfill the professional ambitions of many of the students enrolled in such programs. Despite the overall shortage of qualified professors in the Russian Federation<sup>149</sup> and the looming crisis of educators once the current generation begins to retire in seven to ten years<sup>150</sup>, neither increased wages nor competitive hiring practices are anywhere to be found. Majors such as history, literature, engineering and science rarely produce high salaries, nor do they grant access to desirable professions. More lucrative specialties are much more attractive to ambitious students.

Student choices of major and their preferred training are not dependent on a realistic image of the labor market. The most popular majors have been "economist," "lawyer" and "consultant"<sup>151</sup>. Despite the seemingly attractive nature of these choices, Russian universities do not produce attractive labor market candidates. The position most in demand is a "manager," which is not satisfactorily produced by the existing higher education system. This condition exacerbates a leadership talent shortage in most Russian firms<sup>152</sup>. This problem is exacerbated by the way that universities orient their programs towards the labor market, relying equally on speculation and inflated, temporary demand<sup>153</sup>. Some students realized their poor choice of major and completely disregard their first degrees in order to get a different bachelor's degree<sup>154</sup>. Other students simultaneously enroll in two faculties at once in order to maximize their appeal to employers in the labor market, but not necessarily to maximize wages<sup>155</sup>. Unfortunately, many Russian students suffer from a lack of accurate

information about the labor market that causes them to acquire unmarketable skills and forces companies to use their own training to make up the discrepancy<sup>156</sup>. Even with enhanced training, the labor market remains very difficult to understand for many graduates.

The Russian labor market's particular selection and performance criteria do not allow for rational actors and rational criteria to incentivize higher education decisions. First of all, one must remember that the Russian labor market does not exist in a truly free market economy. Companies can regularly use unbalancing policies to gain temporary advantages, and firm performance may not be predominantly based on competitive factors<sup>157</sup>. Furthermore, firms rarely recruit unknown students based on qualifications alone. Many graduating students rely entirely on informal contacts and non-market factors to find a job<sup>158</sup>. Unfortunately, many students do not understand what qualities are valued by the labor market, and they rarely identify with the qualities that are in highest demand<sup>159</sup>. The one area in which the expectations of students and the labor market converge is in the value of having a degree<sup>160</sup>, which is seen as an essential validation of a candidate's abilities. Despite this caveat, the overall confusion of perceptions is exacerbated by the corruption in Russian society.

#### **4.) CORRUPTION DEFINITION AND CAUSALITY**

Corruption is an unfortunate and persistent problem that has been historically endemic to many societies. Partial treatment and the supremacy of personal interest over public interest is nothing new. This problem, although stubbornly present in many modern societies, often defies conventional understanding and study. In fact, the body of literature on corruption is mostly relatively recent and nuanced. Globalization has brought traditional centers of developed institutional power into regular contact with emerging economies and traditional systems of social organization. This kind of contact has made the question of corruption more important than ever, especially as commercial organizations from one cultural background try to participate in different institutional and social environments. What may seem corrupt in one environment is seen as perfectly acceptable in another.

##### **4.1.) Standard Definitions**

For the purposes of this paper, the definition of corruption will be created by examining existing literature and the unique directions of this study. First of all, the hidden and intangible nature of corruption creates problems in making any definition<sup>161</sup>. In another regard, the potential scope of corruption involves such a diverse mass of events that no single definition is sufficient to encapsulate them all. For example, Gavrilov and Shevchenko defined corruption as the abuse of power by someone who monopolized authority in some way<sup>162</sup>. This definition would appear to be supported by Rasma Karklins' contention that a communist political monopoly and the subsequent state economic monopoly inevitably led to corruption<sup>163</sup>. Another conceptualization is that corruption is basically a monopoly combined with arbitrariness minus responsibility<sup>164</sup>. These definitions are useful in some specific



contexts, but they do not capture the entirety of the problem. For example, lower-level bureaucrats do not necessarily monopolize decision-making or reviewing powers due to overlapping jurisdictions and interference from superiors. In fact, in the Russian system of vertically-corrupt hierarchies, this kind of approach to defining corruption is sometimes appropriate<sup>165</sup>. Another view is that corruption is fundamentally an abuse of the allocation of scarce resources<sup>166</sup>. In this sense, the totality of Karklins' definition is avoided, but it still relies on scarcity of necessary resources. Ambitious corruptors may simply seek preferential treatment in an otherwise equal marketplace via corruption, which would not fall into this definition. In many environments, scarcity in its myriad forms does in fact foster corruption, but it isn't necessary for corruption to be present.

Another possible definition of corruption relates to extortion. For some interpretations of corruption literature, the main feature of corruption is the control of a necessary service, which is then abused for payment<sup>167</sup>. This definition certainly applies to some cases of corruption, but not to all. In fact, this is better defined as rent-seeking behavior, or extortion. In other words, this type of corruption only depicts active, predatory action on the part of an authority, but does not include susceptibility or a willingness to engage in corrupting activities by non-authorities. A regular complaint of the Russian business environment, for example, is the unbalancing and dangerous advantages enjoyed by businesses that are able to influence or compromise governmental agencies in order to protect or expand their market share, which is not necessarily extortion. This business-led approach is reflected in another Osipian definition of higher education corruption as "a system of informal relations established to regulate unsanctioned access to material and nonmaterial assets through abuse of the office of

public or corporate trust"<sup>168 169</sup>. This definition includes both sides of a corrupt transaction, but it implies a systemic character that may not be present in many instances of corruption.

It is essential to include the individual character of corruption in any definition. This is captured in two similar definitions, being "the abuse of authority for material gain" and "the exchange of wealth for power, where power is rooted in a public position"<sup>170</sup>. These both fall prey to the assumption of predetermined means of compensation. In fact, many corrupt transactions and abuses of office take place for no specific material reward, instead relying on accumulating influence or non-material favors. In fact, a major form of corrupt exchange in a thoroughly corrupt society is in diversifying and expanding one's influence - an exchange of power for power. The most popular definition that is encountered across the corruption literature is partially applicable in this regard. As concisely stated by Karklins, corruption is identified as "the misuse of public power for private gain"<sup>171 172</sup>. This definition is quite applicable to higher education and to most kinds of corruption found in the former Soviet Union. However, not only does it fall prey to the difficulties of above-mentioned Osipian definition, it also presumes private, individual gain. The Soviet Union's collapse often led to severe material and financial shortages within the higher education system<sup>173 174 175</sup>. In this unique environment, the goal of corruption is not automatically to line the pockets of corrupt officials, but to support the institutional needs of many institutions. Economic inequalities and other structural pressures, including salaries that have no relation to the market value of life in a major Russian city, can create great incentives for corrupt behavior, but not necessarily for private gain. In another sense, the abuse of authority in a private firm can also be considered corrupt, including engaging in demand side corruption, abusing market position

or providing misleading information for private gain. These acts, however, are not included in an exclusively public focus.

#### **4.2.) Specific Definition for My Paper**

For the purposes of this paper, corruption will be examined in terms of its implications. Corruption shall be defined as any voluntary behavior, including the abuse of trust or authority that harms or trivializes the legitimacy and effectiveness of an otherwise impartial institution or organization. Since the fundamental role of any social institution is to function impartially for any citizens that use or depend on its services, the reliability of such an institution is paramount. The key aspect of corruption is that it undermines the credibility of such institutions to the degree that their dysfunction harms those that do not have the ability to influence it dishonestly. Therefore, all actions that deviate from an institution's purpose or affect its ability to reliably produce impartial results are to be defined as corrupt.

The scope of this definition can pose some complications, but they are necessary in order to fully understand the act of corruption in any institutional or social context. Firstly, the reason for this focus on institutional implications is that both corruptors and the corrupted must be included in any examination of the topic. In higher education, students are also representatives of the institution later in life. Should they abuse a public resource, (a university), for their own gain (cheating to receive an unearned diploma), then this action is functionally and ethically equivalent to simply giving a series of bribes for the same result. The absence of a complicit authority does not mean that corruption has not taken place, especially since the appearance of an undeserving degree recipient raises the suspicion of

corruption. The value of this kind of definition will become clearer as the idea of higher educational corruption is examined in greater detail.

There are several difficulties with this definition that should be addressed before using it as a base for serious academic endeavor. By assigning responsibility to those without power, the victims of corrupt acts may potentially be blamed for their situation. For example, someone who is forced to pay a bribe to a doctor in order to get necessary treatment is decidedly a victim, not an initiator. This is precisely why corruption must be examined as a voluntary action, as specified in the definition. When absolute coercion occurs, the initiator carries the overwhelming burden of the blame, as she would be the only voluntary party. An example of this definition in action is getting a driver's license in Russia. For some, an honest method of passing a driver's test is a very predictable way to get a driver's license. For others, it is nearly impossible to get a license without giving gifts to the examiner - a kind of soft bribe. For those who can't be bothered with finding an honest means to get a license and choose to simply offer a bribe, the blame for corruption would also lie with the non-authority. And for those stuck with a dishonest inspector, having no means to otherwise get their license, the responsibility for the corrupt act would lie with the licensing authority. This meticulous approach is necessary to understand the intricate types of corruption found in modern Russian society.

### **4.3.) Sources of Corruption**

#### **4.3.1.) Systemic / Institutional**

Institutional and systemic pressures are major source of corruption in the higher educational system of the Russian Federation. The economic crisis of the early 1990s sent

shockwaves throughout key institutional pillars of the emerging state. Spending on education dropped from 9.6% of GDP in 1986 to 2.9% in 2000<sup>176</sup>, and Russian education spending as a percentage of GDP is still lower than many developed nations<sup>177</sup>. Long periods passed where civil servants were not paid and budgets were not provided, which was crippling for a sector of the economy that is so state dependent. In this difficult environment, corruption is seen as a possible way of meeting institutional demands without relying on an incapable state patron<sup>178</sup>. This kind of corruption can be caused in two ways. One way is when the institution itself organizes and promotes systemic corrupt behavior, so as to meet its basic requirements. An example of this would be where a university's rector organizes a system that ensures the corrupt selection of students and the withholding of key services so that budgets could be met. This kind of situation is quite optimistic, assuming that a comprehensively corrupt institution behaves collectively and only out of the need for its own survival. However, the more common form of this type of corruption is realized on an individual level.

The individual level of this corruption model is easily seen in the uncoordinated acts of extortion that have characterized the 1990s through to the current day. According to a recent survey, the average instructor is the main breadwinner for his or her family, has worked for in the field for an average of 23 years and rates the material condition of their families as average<sup>179</sup>. Unfortunately, educators at state institutions have notoriously low wages<sup>180</sup>, an average of 6,000 RUR per month<sup>181</sup>. In a stark comparison, this pay is less than that of bus drivers and subway engineers<sup>182</sup>. This amount of pay in no way can provide for the essentials of daily life in most regions of Russia, to say nothing of the high cost of living in a capital city

like Moscow. This financial pressure forces many professors at Russia's most prestigious universities to take on extra jobs at multiple institutions and to augment such a demanding schedule with additional private tutoring in off-hours.

Due to the unfortunately low pay of even this taxing work regimen, professors are often left without enough money to live. Therefore, corruption is seen as the only way out to meet basic financial needs<sup>183</sup>. This unfortunate condition is key for explaining the current professor shortage in Russia, and why the nation may very likely run out of professors in ten or fifteen years<sup>184</sup>. From a more esoteric perspective, low relative pay and prestige could harm educational professionals' psychological well-being and reduce their ability to function morally<sup>185</sup>. The attractiveness of bribery in this environment is readily apparent, since the level of expected bribes can exceed official pay by three or four times<sup>186</sup>.

In another sense, systematic pressures can be realized in simple institutional resource inadequacy. For example, dissertation review boards are so understaffed that they cannot realistically review the number of dissertations that are submitted every year, which makes corruption a potential necessity to grant otherwise essential services<sup>187</sup>. Therefore, professionals could be hopelessly unequipped to deal with their personal or professional responsibilities, which incentivizes rule-breaking.

The systemic pressure model is the most popular explanation for current levels of corruption in the Russian Federation. With the chaotic and crippling 1990s still weighing strongly in recent memory, many experts immediately look to financial and institutional pressures as the primary factors in determining corrupt behavior in all aspects of Russian public life<sup>188</sup>. Furthermore, the systemic pressure model plays a very diplomatic role in

determining the sources of Russian corruption by alleviating the blame of any one individual. Be it the state budget, incompetent state ministers or simple uncertainty in the future, education professionals are characterized by themselves and other observers as victims of a system beyond their control<sup>189 190</sup>. In fact, in higher education, many observers tend to see corruption as 'forced' onto students and educators<sup>191</sup>. This kind of perception may not necessarily be accurate. Unfortunately, in light of recent budget policies and major increases to teacher pay, coupled with the extravagant lifestyles of some educators, the systemic pressure model alone is not sufficient to analyze the question of corruption in Russian higher education.

Many academic professionals do not engage in corruption for purely survival reasons. In many cases, academic professionals rely on opportunism to engage in corrupt behavior<sup>192</sup>. In fact, many institutional structures that were designed to generate additional income for universities were put into place once restrictions were lifted, but before the major economic chaos of the 1990s<sup>193</sup>. It is a common practice of corrupt institutions to automatically blame systemic pressures and a lack of finance to justify ongoing corrupt behavior, even when this is far from the truth<sup>194</sup>. This is demonstrated by observations of how increasing salaries do not necessarily reduce corruption once corrupt behavior has been normalized<sup>195</sup>.

Another important factor in the overall consideration of systemic corruption is the level of adaptation by key actors. The economic shocks of the 1990s took place long ago, and most professors have long since adapted. It is important to remember that Russian education is not populated by "average" professors, but by a large stratification of different types of educators<sup>196</sup>. This kind of stratification creates some classes of professors and educational

professionals that are above the standard systemic pressures of the Russian university system due to their prestige and income<sup>197</sup>. Professors often have multiple avenues of supplemental income that allow them to live, including multiple jobs<sup>198</sup>, tutoring<sup>199</sup> and non-academic work as well<sup>200</sup>. However, there could also be a simple desire to engage in corrupt activity for something other than essential material needs - which may be reflected in the trend of growing corruption in the Russian Federation despite easing of systemic pressures.

Recent government policies have substantially reduced the overall systemic pressure placed on Russian higher educational institutions. Whereas academic funding did not significantly increase for ten years after the collapse of the Soviet Union<sup>201</sup>, the Russian Federation's higher education budget increased dramatically in the last few years, more than eclipsing pre-crisis levels. In fact, the budget for higher education has increased by 400% from 2000-2006<sup>202</sup>. In some cases, instructors' salaries have been increased to a very respectable 30,000 RUR per month<sup>203</sup>. State subsidies per student in free positions has increased from 18,000 RUR per year to 51,600 RUR<sup>204</sup>, which greatly alleviates budget shortages even though the estimated cost of educating a student now stands at 74,400RUR. Even though some financial shortages remain, they are a fraction of what they once were. This means that the level of corruption involved should be responding to higher funding by decreasing, not increasing. Unfortunately, higher education corruption has been a booming business. The overall level of corruption in higher education has increasing rapidly every year, which will be addressed in the next section. Therefore, systemic pressures alone are not sufficient to explain this issue. In an even more telling example, the Russian government has decided to cease its continual increases in higher education funding in favor of investing in



primary and secondary education, since it has been perceived that systemic weaknesses have been adequately addressed<sup>205</sup>.

In terms of the timeline of corruption and reduced state capability, the emergence of this problem is very telling. Soviet higher educational institutions independently sought their own autonomy from the state before the chaotic 1990s<sup>206</sup>, thereby independently limiting state influence and support before the collapse of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the modern trend of dissertation corruption in Russia apparently began in Moscow during the 1990s, despite the fact that this region suffered the least from financial hardships<sup>207</sup>. This trend of regional preference in corruption continues today, further undermining the systemic pressure model. Higher education corruption is the highest in Saint Petersburg and Moscow<sup>208</sup>, where universities are the best funded and professors are better compensated than anywhere else in the Russian Federation. In another example, Taganrog State University has recently improved its status and reduced corruption with cadre changes and leadership renewal, despite ongoing and severe systemic pressures<sup>209</sup>. Therefore, increasing tendencies in corruption in higher education must be caused by some additional factor in addition to partial budgetary insufficiency.

#### 4.3.2.) Historical

Corruption is an inheritable behavior that can be transmitted via conditioning and socialization, as seen in the way that Russia's recent history influenced the current state of corruption in its system of higher education. In fact, it could be argued that the primary reason for the longevity of corruption as a fixture of Russian public life is that it is a value that is handed down from one generation to the next, despite systemic changes. Corruption is far

from a recent innovation in Russia. Despite a much higher level of prestige for Soviet universities and academies than their modern counterparts, corruption was a key part of student life and the admissions process, but in a much less flagrant way<sup>210</sup>. This was compounded by the essential role of higher education in serving the needs of the "communist establishment"<sup>211</sup> rather than serving as a center of advancing knowledge. All institutions in the Soviet Union were touched by corruption to a certain degree, including periods of rule by both Stalin<sup>212</sup> and Khrushchev<sup>213</sup>. Departing far from the original concept of a functional, classless, unbiased state, the economy and all parts of civil life became independent sources of power and privilege for those that could control them. Key decisions were made in consideration of blat (hidden political and economic influence) than of the public good.

For many in the Soviet Union, corruption was the only means available to meet one's needs independent of the state. First of all, the state's structure became more and more rigid, which produced a greater and greater need for individuals and organizations to improvise so as to meet their basic needs. In fact, many official functions became reduced to mere ritual. Even anti-corruption campaigns and policies gradually came to be regarded with extreme cynicism<sup>214</sup>, and any large-scale anti-corruption activity met serious political opposition<sup>215</sup>. A regularly quoted Soviet joke perfectly captures this point - "we pretend to work and the state pretends to pay us." This ubiquitous state inadequacy led to greater and greater feelings of resentment and cynicism towards official power, even as corruption became an inextricable part of Soviet daily life<sup>216</sup>. The state gradually became a massive, abusive and incompetent patron to its citizen clients.

Towards the end of the Soviet Union, resisting state legitimacy and subverting state power became key parts of everyday life and mass culture. The Soviet economy functioned only thanks to a system of illegal barter between supposedly independent industries. Furthermore, widespread police and customs corruption allowed for the widespread, and very illegal, shadow economy to function<sup>217</sup>. For some in Russia, this kind of black market was desirable and essential. Ubiquitous perceptions of elite corruption led to routine instances of state defiance that, despite their corrupt nature, were not seen as corrupt by the low-level actors who committed them<sup>218</sup>. The state was no longer any kind of provider or protector, but a doddering, lumbering enemy that deserved to be manipulated and exploited at every opportunity<sup>219</sup>. Another popular saying of the Soviet period reflects this mentality: "If you don't steal from the government, then you are stealing from your family." This anti-state mentality exacerbated the ongoing problems of state effectiveness throughout the 1990s.

The 1990s created widespread structural problems for the modern Russian educational system, and it also fundamentally changed the professional and institutional culture that controlled them. The loss of state control at the center removed many barriers and policing mechanisms that would otherwise have de-incentivized corrupt practices<sup>220</sup>. Suddenly losing the ability to function on a professional level and to support oneself on a survival level created financial desperation<sup>221</sup>. This impossible situation caused a "breaking of psychological barriers"<sup>222</sup> that forever changed the priorities of educators and administrators. Corruption was at first an improvised, detestable and necessary means of temporary support, but it became a standard way to earn money in the field of higher education, which gradually grew in sophistication<sup>223</sup>. Authorities in this area adapted to the consistent level of illegitimate

income that corruption provided, and they came to gradually embrace it as a means of realizing their own desires, and those of their colleagues.

Higher educational institutions and hierarchies gradually transformed into agencies that specifically controlled and manipulated access to resources for the purposes of amassing bribe money. Administrators would advance the careers of those that would "play ball" and productively participate in the overall corrupt scheme<sup>224</sup>. In fact, some organizations became so adapted to corruption, that widespread systems of organized, hierarchical and vertical corrupt activity would come to dominate the institution itself<sup>225</sup>. Professors and administrators would be expected to engage in this activity so as to benefit their superiors' demands for illegitimate income. All services, from dormitories to grading to diploma awarding became dominated by corrupt expectations and bribery in some cases<sup>226</sup>. As described by some experts on the topic, bribery in education became merely "an open social secret"<sup>227</sup>. This type of exploitation became so widespread that it has been accepted by some students as an unfortunate, but entirely normal additional cost of attending a university. This behavior on the part of those who bribe is also indicative of a significant perception of corruption.

#### 4.3.3.) Perceptions

Recent Russian history and historical legacies of the Soviet Union have directly led to an ongoing cultural perception of corruption that has conditioned citizens to expect and participate in corruption on a regular basis. This phenomenon is essential to include, since "corruption is not only a problem of governing, but also a daily expectation among the mass publics."<sup>228</sup> Expanding on the role of institutions in shaping behavior as noted in the

Michigan Law example, the shaping role of a society composed of corrupt institutions is even more telling. Citizens regularly participate in what is defined as "petty corruption," which occurs at a low level of society and has fewer broader institutional or social implications<sup>229</sup>. Participation in this type of corruption is often rationalized by ubiquitously perceived corruption among the higher levels of the government, which citizens see as a means to both excuse their behavior and to rationalize it as a means of advancing oneself<sup>230</sup>. To this end, perceptions of corruption, no matter how accurate they may be, play a decisive role in influencing the corrupt behavior of lower level actors. This conclusion becomes significant, because it is often hard to determine whether a corrupt actor behaves in such a way due to personal material ambition and abuse of office or due to the irresistible pressure of constant bribe offers. The media, as a primary source of information and perception formation about corruption<sup>231</sup>, must be examined in any given country to evaluate the role perceptions of corruption play.

The Russian media is completely saturated with depictions of corruption, supporting the perception that illegitimate activity is the rule rather than an exception. The media is constantly presenting newer and more shocking stories of corruption and its high price on society. Corruption in higher education is often covered by the media<sup>232</sup>. The standard story is a scathing expose of low-level bureaucratic corruption, which leaves many of the higher officials unmentioned<sup>233</sup> and allows for corruption to persist from the top<sup>234</sup>. This approach, despite playing into the Western narrative that the Russian media is fully compromised or controlled by the state in order to legitimize the current regime, is not valid. Any episode of "Код доступа," regularly aired on the Gazprom-owned Эхо Москвы radio station is full of

the most scathing accusations of corruption of even the highest level officials. Regular descriptions of how national authorities are either powerless or complicit in corrupt acts reinforce the idea that illegitimate activity is to be expected and suspected at every turn<sup>235</sup>. Corruption has even become a regular part of popular humor, as demonstrated by some of the most popular shows on major Russian networks. One television show, "Наша Паша," (Our Russia) features the recurring character of a provincial traffic cop, who is regularly shaken down by his fur-coat wearing, chauffeur-driven MVD superior. His commander would reproach the hapless officer for not collecting enough in bribes, while suggesting that he follow the example of a prostitute standing next to him, who is able to kick up far more money to her corrupt patron. To what degree this two-sided example of corrupt activity is considered the responsibility of corrupt authority or the willing criminal is a matter for consideration.

#### **4.4.) Two-Sided Corruption**

Two-sided corruption is an important addition to the discussion on corruption literature by including both parties that are not officially responsible and activity that is not officially criminal activity. One of the most important characteristics of the corrupt Russian higher educational system is that corruption is two-sided. As Karklins points out, in a corrupt system average people can be both victims and accomplices, and corruption can come from both the state and private individuals<sup>236</sup>. Both authorities and citizens engage in corrupt acts by either demanding or offering bribes for favorable treatment. A major distinction here from the standard view of corruption is that no authority is necessary, nor is anything more than nominal association with an institution required in order to be involved in a corrupt act. The

abuse of an institution from a position of authority and a position of dependence are both possible, and those who would gain from an institution in an illegitimate (albeit subservient) way are also considered to be corrupt for the purposes of this paper. The willing bribe taker and the voluntary bribe giver are equally corrupt. In terms of higher education, a student can be just as corrupt as a professor, with the same potential result. If such corrupt acts were committed on a large scale by all possible dependent actors, then the effects would be significant and worthy of overall consideration. Whereas an abuse of authority is considered criminal, a group of students that engage in coordinated cheating are not committing criminal behavior, despite the fact that action could be considered corrupt. The two functions of a higher educational institution in human capital development and its overall institutional validity for the temporary personal gain of the corrupting actor, regardless of their position of authority. Furthermore, an important distinguishing feature of corruption is that it is not always an illegal act.

Non-criminal and unregulated activities must be included in the overall discussion of corruption, since they can have terrible effects on the overall value of an institution and the society that it serves. Actions that fall outside the realm of clearly illegal activity, such as deliberately losing important paperwork, turning the other way when someone cheats on a licensing exam, or not answering the phone at an emergency service due to extended smoking breaks, still do significant harm to the effectiveness of an institution and must be included in the overall definition of corruption. It is true that gross incompetence in positions of authority that lead to death or personal harm is considered illegal. However, the ability of interested parties to regulate corrupt or incompetent behavior with policing is far from fully effective<sup>237</sup>.

In this context, subordinates take advantage of an institutional weakness for their own ends and to the detriment of another dependent individual. In general, the realm of criminal statutes about corruption is by no means comprehensive enough to include the majority of damaging activity. For example, favoritism is very difficult to prove, except in egregious cases, as are any biases. Some corrupt acts may not have any real measurable reward. Should a police officer look the other way when he witnesses an old friend commit a petty crime - emotional rewards and sentimentality cannot be measured or reliably proven. This kind of activity is important in an overall examination of the various kinds of corruption that plague the Russian higher education system.



## **5.) HIGHER EDUCATION CORRUPTION**

### **5.1.) Introduction - What kinds of actions in Russian Higher Education are Corrupt?**

Russian higher education suffers from massive levels of corruption. According to a 2008 poll, anywhere from 11-19% of Russian families have admitted to bribing educational institutions for either admissions or grades<sup>238</sup>. Another 2008 estimate asserted that higher education corruption was costing the Russian government more than one billion dollars per year<sup>239</sup>, and the annual amount of bribes that occurs in universities is now estimated to be anywhere from \$540 million to \$1.5 billion<sup>240</sup>. This kind of corruption involves hundreds of thousands of people<sup>241</sup>. Even formerly sacrosanct areas such as doctoral education have been affected and are widely perceived to be corrupt<sup>242</sup>. Measured levels of higher education corruption in the Russian Federation from 2001-2005 demonstrate that this is a "systemic" problem, reaching nearly 60% of students in some cases<sup>243</sup>. In 2002, it was estimated that a majority of Russian students graduate with the aid of corrupt methods<sup>244</sup>. This trend led education to be recognized as the most corrupt sector of Russian society in 2004<sup>245</sup> and 2005<sup>246</sup>. Unfortunately, according to UNESCO, bribery in Russian higher educational institutions have discredited them so much that they are practically being "destroyed" as effective social institutions<sup>247</sup>. This unfortunate situation of high corruption in a crucial social institution has several serious consequences. These include a reduction in institutional confidence, a denial of the essential services of higher education, a reduction in human capital and an overall socialization of corruption throughout society<sup>248 249</sup>. Inasmuch as the scale of

higher education corruption is a concern for its greater implications, it also demands a specific approach that examines its diverse mechanisms.

Corruption in Russian higher education is an intricate topic that encompasses many different types of corrupt acts<sup>250</sup>. In order to satisfactorily examine this phenomenon's implications, they must be examined in terms of each specific kind of corruption that is present in the system. For the purposes of this paper financial corruption, selection corruption, grading corruption, accreditation corruption and academic dishonesty will be examined. Some scholars have divided these types of corruption into student-affecting and non-student-affecting<sup>251</sup>. All corrupt acts in public view and close to an institution's dependents are significant in shaping perceptions; therefore any perceived corruption will be considered as having an effect on students for this thesis. It should be noted that the mechanisms for specific corrupt exchanges will be mentioned as examples of corrupt behavior, but their implications will be examined entirely relative to the corruption's role in the academic process. It is also important to note that when analyzing systemic corruption, it is very difficult if not impossible to be precise, since the nature of corruption ensures that it is consistently hidden from any observer<sup>252 253</sup>. In this situation, the only available evidence is anecdotal, which provides a telling, if imperfect picture of the greater phenomenon. In order to best understand this varied world of ethically dubious activity, a step-by-step approach is necessary.

## **6.) FINANCIAL CORRUPTION**

### **6.1.) Identification and Definition Adherence**

Financial corruption involves an array of actions that are corrupt and often illegal. The traditional example of financial corruption is the abuse of financial resources for a purpose other than that of the institution, such as via embezzlement. This is the most clearly corrupt act, since it is both illegal and undermining. Furthermore, it meets the unique definition of corruption that has been chosen for this study, since it is both voluntary and harmful to the institution - in terms of financial deprivation and the subsequent undermining of its credibility among students and other public observers.

### **6.2.) Methods and Examples**

Financial corruption methods are as old as human society, and they include several specifically harmful techniques. This practice is found in many countries and includes approaches that both divert state support for the university and manipulate the private sector<sup>254</sup>. First of all, the chronic issue of embezzlement demands attention. State funds, occasionally regarded as nothing more than a potential source of personal enrichment for those with access in Russian and Soviet society, still fall prey to regular plunder by officials<sup>255</sup>. A recent investigation by the MVD, "Образование - 2009," revealed several large-scale instances of embezzlement by city and regional education officials across Russia<sup>256</sup>. Other common techniques of this kind of corruption include inflating orders, changing invoices, overpaying and issuing kickbacks, all which are used in countries around the world<sup>257</sup>.

Since the state is the major actor in Russian higher education, providing major financial support for every “free” student spot, the opportunity to divert state funds is omnipresent. In the educational system, this is done in a simple way. Some universities falsely over-report the number of free students enrolled so as to receive more funding<sup>258</sup>. Someone with access to budgetary authority redirects funds from one department to another account, access to which is only available for the corrupt administrator. Other methods include redirecting funds not directly to the administrator, but via the university itself. Examples of this kind of financial abuse abound, such as rector’s offices that are equipped with private luxury bedrooms and lavish saunas<sup>259</sup>, despite the university’s crumbling facilities. The sale or misappropriation of university resources is a particularly nagging source of corruption in modern Russia. Theoretically facing regular budget crises, some Russian universities have resorted to exploiting the most valuable resource that they own – property. Often occupying some of the most desirable real estate in the most prosperous cities in Russia, many universities either rent out their facilities to private companies<sup>260</sup> or sell them outright<sup>261</sup>. Therefore, it is not completely uncommon to see banks, law firms or consulting offices operating inside universities themselves.

The economic needs of a university provide a broad variety of ways to facilitate major financial corruption. Heyneman describes this phenomenon as “procurement corruption,”<sup>262</sup> where a university uses large-scale orders of supplies, textbooks, equipment, etc. as a means of attracting corrupt income. A third kind of corruption mechanism in this sector is to provide exclusive concession service rights to connected interests. At one Moscow university, the rector’s son was given control of the student café, where he immediately increased prices to

ridiculous levels and reduced costs by absurd amounts – causing great outcry among students<sup>263</sup>. Popular resistance was able to end this particular instance of corruption, but such outcry is rare. In another case, at Nizhny Novgorod University, students are crowded into cramped, terrible dormitories, while the university administration builds luxury apartment blocks for the exclusive use of administrators<sup>264</sup>. So long as the aggrieved party makes no complaint, because they themselves often may be complicit and profit from this act, then no attention is attracted from authorities. In such a situation, without clear criminal investigations, the only reliable accounts are rumors.

### **6.3.) Implications**

#### **6.3.1.) Exacerbating Systemic Pressure**

Financial corruption has many implications for Russian higher education, although they often do not directly affect students. In terms of embezzlement or procurement corruption, the implications are clear. Vital financial resources, often claimed to be already insufficient, are consumed by corrupt officials, which then exacerbates a tense situation. Financial corruption, although often not directly affecting students due to its administrative character, can exacerbate existing systemic pressures by creating unnecessary budget shortages and other stresses on underfunded departments, which already appear to be so severe that they harm the ability of Russia to grow economically<sup>265</sup>. Therefore, if diverted funds directly and artificially inflate financial deprivation, then other forms of corruption that are affected by systemic pressure grow. In this difficult environment, any systemic reform efforts are fundamentally limited, as well as the basic functioning of any institution, despite sufficiently addressing financial shortages. Furthermore, this level of financial deprivation

harms students. Since stipends are also publicly funded, their miserly level forces most students to take on major work obligations in order to support themselves<sup>266</sup>. Regularly skipping months of classes and running out of time to complete any assignments, students are then highly incentivized to engage in corrupt behavior such as bribery and cheating in order to maintain their academic status. In essence, financial corruption saps any institution's effectiveness by compromising fundamental mechanisms, the well-being of its dependents and that of those that manage it.

### 6.3.2.) Corrupt Institutional Culture

Financial corruption leads to an institutional culture of corruption that further harms higher education. Financial corruption in any of its forms requires several complicit individuals to succeed. In this environment, individuals in positions of responsibility surround themselves with those that are willing to undertake corruption and protect their complicit superiors, thus forming a corrupt "krug." Corrupt "krugi," or circles, are rife in the former Soviet Union, and are a primary mechanism for widespread, organized corruption<sup>267</sup>. Krugi also can function via the silence of one's peers about corrupt activity that they themselves are not participating in<sup>268</sup>. By providing both the means for corrupt activity and mutual cover, krugi are remarkably effective, even more when one considers that bribes are not exchanged via krugi, but influence and favors<sup>269</sup>. Within an organization or across different societal sectors, many krugi overlap and can self-perpetuate, creating widespread corruption across entire regions or economic sectors<sup>270</sup>. In this environment, and in a typically vertically hierarchal organization like a university, corruption can very easily become the determining factor in overall organizational structure and institutional culture<sup>271</sup>.

This kind of environment can do irreversible and destructive harm to an institution of higher education, transforming the entire institution from one of learning and human capital development to one of exploitation and theft. In the case of being fully compromised, a corrupt higher educational institution can render serious harm to its students and to society in the form of deprivation of the necessary graduates who would otherwise be better able to contribute to society. Furthermore, the students directly suffer from an indifferent organization that is no longer interested in its official duty so much as the perpetuation of dysfunctional policies and criminal enrichment.

#### 6.3.3.) Socializing Corruption

Corrupt higher educational institutions present serious long-term implications for students and human capital in general. Students that thrive in a corrupt higher educational environment have often successfully adapted to its unique requirements, corruption and all<sup>272</sup>. In this case, a corrupt university administrative structure could be shaping students to be actors in a future corrupt system and to expect corruption at every turn<sup>273 274</sup>. Not simply turning students into cynical professionals, but into fully functional participants in a corrupt system is a serious distortion of the shaping role of a university. In this situation, students' soft skills could be profoundly warped. Instead of developing diligence, patience and persuasion, they could be shaped to develop ways to either compromise a system that is seen as corrupt or to avoid and undermine it at every turn, very much as Soviet citizens that were shaped by the Soviet Union. As mentioned earlier, views of ubiquitous corruption in the Soviet Union were used to justify individual acts of corruption. It would be reckless to assume that the shaping role of a single corrupt institution in modern Russia could match that

of the entire corrupt institutional network of the Soviet Union. However, the omnipresence of tangible corruption can hardly develop graduates that are better prepared to participate in and support a free society. Furthermore, by looking at the Michigan law school example, it is certain that institutions and institutional culture can play a decisive role in the future behavior and perceptions of students. Therefore, it is a very real risk that the behavior of a corrupt institution can distort the worldviews and behavior of those that depend on it. Unfortunately, the problems facing the Russian Federation's higher education system are not related solely to financial abuses by administrative organs.

#### 6.3.4.) Safety and Physical Risks

Financial corruption can directly damage the value of a university and even risk the lives of Russian students. Russian universities are plagued by outdated and useless equipment that prevents them from competing on an international level<sup>275</sup>. Moreover, financial deprivation has allowed many higher educational institutions' facilities to decay to an unheard of degree<sup>276 277</sup>. In fact, many dormitories/are considered unsafe to live in for students, due to problems with utilities and not meeting fire codes<sup>278</sup>. This example was tragically demonstrated in a Moscow dormitory fire that led to the death of several students<sup>279 280</sup>. Furthermore, the unauthorized rental of school property can lead to terrible risks due to the carelessness of tenants and the ways that student welfare is disregarded<sup>281</sup>. This kind of tangible physical risk to students is certainly unacceptable by any standard, yet systemic pressures of individual corrupt motivation can lead an organization to endure such risks for the purpose of profiting from corruption.



## **7.) SELECTION CORRUPTION**

### **7.1.) Identification and Definition Adherence**

Admissions and selection are major sources of corruption in Russian higher education, occupying arguably the highest position in terms of visibility and scale. Selection corruption is the biased admission of unqualified students at the expense of better qualified applicants according to a university's official standards due to dishonest interference from an influential member of the admissions committee or the university administration. Selection corruption is significant in the sense that it can occur with or without bribery. Via selection corruption, the overall effectiveness of a university is undermined, since honest efforts to enroll are trivialized, and views of the university as impartial are harmed.

### **7.2.) Methods and Examples**

Selection corruption was a chronic problem in the Soviet Union<sup>282</sup>, and it persists today in many forms<sup>283</sup>. Admission to the most promising universities in the Soviet Union was an expected privilege of the children of nomenklatura members and professors' children<sup>284</sup>. The belief was so widespread that selection was possible for those that could bribe or influence corrupt officials that it took a systemic character. According to the monopoly definition of corruption<sup>285</sup>, higher education was a profoundly fertile ground for corrupt selection<sup>286</sup>. Valuable commodities in the Soviet Union that would produce tangible benefits, such as a prestigious education, were in a sharp deficit<sup>287</sup>. And those that controlled access to it, like all gatekeepers in a monopoly, were prone to corruption. Modern day selection corruption is no less ubiquitous, but much less formalized.

The sophisticated mechanisms for selection corruption provide many ways of hiding the act itself. Since selection corruption, like all aspects of corruption, is a fundamentally hidden phenomenon, it is essential for the perpetrators that reliable, indirect methods be developed in order to ensure consistency and stability in this act. A classic example from recent Russian educational life is tutoring as a means of bribery. Bribery can occur by privately hiring tutors for an aspiring student who happen to have the ability to influence admissions decisions<sup>288 289</sup>. As many as one third of Russian students that graduate from high school use tutors in order to improve their chances of entering a university<sup>290</sup>. Tutors may accept large payments, but never meet with their students, and then, for the most appropriate official reason, the student would be accepted<sup>291</sup>, given a minimally acceptable entrance exam performance. Students that do not undertake such extracurricular persuasion are often seen to be at a distinct disadvantage in selection<sup>292</sup>. Another mechanism for selection corruption is the support of existing corrupt *krugi*. By using informal relations, one determines exactly what kind of bribe is necessary and how much to pay<sup>293</sup>. Ensuring the admission of a valuable contact's children to major educational institutions can pay huge future dividends for Ph.D-holding academics and their other contacts, who can expect other financial rewards at later dates. It should also be noted that the most effective way of hiding major selection corruption was the complete control that a university had over its admissions, which allowed an overall corrupt hierarchy, as mentioned in the previous section, to engage in organized selection corruption. Hiding the results of entrance exams, selective grading or other methods can be very simply organized among the limited membership of an admissions committee. The barrage of selection corruption that permeates the Russian higher educational system is

unique in its visibility and consistency, which has even led to the emergence of a stabilized market of selection corruption.

The remarkably high level of selection corruption as a mass, market-responsive phenomenon requires special attention in order to better understand its implications. As mentioned above, selection corruption has been a fixture of the Russian and Soviet university systems and is widely perceived today<sup>294</sup>. A 2007 survey showed that 98% of Saratov university students had heard of paying bribes to enter the university, and 56% say that bribery is widespread in Russia<sup>295</sup>. Modern levels of selection corruption, however, have become real, tangible markets of corrupt access. According to MVD research, admissions to the most desirable majors at the most prestigious institutions can be valued at tens of thousands of Euros<sup>296</sup>. Admissions to business and law schools at MGU and SPbGU go for 30,000-40,000 Euros<sup>297</sup>. This could be explained by the high levels of demand for these majors<sup>298</sup>. For general admissions, much less is required, and for regional universities, even less than one thousand dollars<sup>299</sup>. This kind of corruption has begun to be traded openly<sup>300</sup>, even seeing the circulation of certain "price lists" for illegitimate admissions<sup>301</sup>.

The bribes-for-admissions phenomenon should also be understood in a uniquely Russian social paradox – bribes are given for “free” positions only. Admission to students can be given officially for a specific tuition amount, as opposed to the traditional method, as reflected in a survey that showed students preferring the relative "ease" of enrolling and passing exams<sup>302</sup>. Almost half of Russian students now attend classes on a tuition basis<sup>303</sup>. Despite this apparently legal form of paid entrance, the social stigma of publicly paying for an education is so great<sup>304</sup> that most bribers prefer to pay for free positions. Furthermore, both

tuition-paying and non-tuition-paying students are compelled to bribe at the same rate after entry<sup>305</sup>. So, despite the official approval of paid admissions, the corruption market is thriving due to providing an apparently superior product in terms of prestige. This type of action, which goes so far as to supersede official methods to allow it, has particularly damaging consequences for Russian higher education, human capital and society in general.

The current state of the selection corruption market reveals a compelling fact - higher education corruption is perpetuated both by corrupt providers, but also by ambitious consumers. Recent surveys and statistics have shown that as many as 80% of Russian parents are willing to engage in bribery in order to ensure their child's admission to a university<sup>306</sup>. This is a major increase from 2004, where it was estimated that only a maximum of 20% of families engaged in bribery or were ready to bribe<sup>307</sup>. Today's families are not only willing to engage in corruption, but to do so at great sacrifice, spending as much as 30-40% of their income on bribes<sup>308</sup>. This demonstrates that not only is there an opportunity to bribe one's way into a college, but also that there's competitive consumer demand for this kind of service. Although a majority of Russian students claim to have entered a university honestly<sup>309</sup>, widespread reports of selection corruption demonstrate that it has a significant presence in higher education overall. The consequences of such a practice are significant.

### **7.3.) Implications**

#### **7.3.1.) Safety and Physical Risks**

Graduates who have benefited from corrupt selection can have directly harmful effects on Russian society. By not only witnessing corruption and being incentivized to use it, directly profiting from corruption can lead to the further socialization of corrupt behavior to a

greater degree after graduation<sup>310</sup>. The mass use of corruption as a means of personal advancement and leveraging influence have come to dominate the psychological development of many Russians, especially in how they decide to enter a university<sup>311</sup>. Education not only benefits the economy, but also instills norms that reinforce social behavior in students, actively engaging in socialization<sup>312</sup>. This trend of socializing corruption is represented in a recent opinion survey of Russian students in Saratov, where only 48% felt that bribery to enter a university was wrong<sup>313</sup>. Selection methods have direct effects on the behavior and expectations of students. Mentality changes in tuition-paying students can cause them to justify corruption and bribery, seeing traditionally free higher education as a simple financial transaction<sup>314</sup>. This is reflected in the high number of students and parents who think that both unethical influence and bribery are acceptable in guaranteeing one's spot in a university<sup>315</sup>, thus demonstrating that they are not merely the unwitting victims of rent-seeking, but that they are actively using the corrupt system to benefit their own interests.

This type of readily available selection corruption can easily lead to a perception that not only is corruption advantageous to the Russian elite, but also that it is a simple currency of social transactions. Such perceptions have damaging effects, since once a student or parent has been given the ascriptive identity of being corrupt, they may continue to behave in such a way for years<sup>316</sup>. Furthermore, corruption in practice by those that benefit from it can easily lead to further corrupt behavior and justification<sup>317</sup>. What sets selection corruption apart from other types of unethical activity is the role that it provides for students and graduates.

Unlike financial corruption, selection corruption conditions a student to engage in and rely on corruption as profiteers from such activity. The key actor in this exchange is a

student's family, where the student would then receive the benefits. Students almost completely depend on their parents during the application process<sup>318</sup>. Students alone cannot provide the means for influencing admissions committees, since they possess neither the financial nor the social resources necessary. In this sense, the high levels of parents openly admitting that they are willing to engage in bribery to get their children admitted becomes more understandable. Sincerely wanting the best for their children, and sincerely believing that corruption is the only way for them to get a fair chance at social advancement are understandable in the modern context<sup>319</sup>.

The role of parents in shaping their children's impressions of the higher education system are interesting, since the expenses incurred for bribery are often beyond the means of regular families. In this sense, students see how their families can use all of their contacts, influence and combined financial resources in a massive attempt to "pull levers" and give a student the opportunity to advance. Furthermore, when an institution of higher education does not succeed in properly socializing a student, their family often fills in by providing different behavioral models<sup>320</sup>. In this sense, if the university were dishonest, the family then fails to provide an alternative model of honest behavior. Therefore, corrupt selection as a function of coordinated family efforts can directly lead to an even more serious corrupt conditioning of graduates.

### 7.3.2.) Socialization via Family Influence

Comprehensively corrupt behavior on the part of Russian elite families socializes their children to engage in corruption despite the influences of higher education. Students that have families with high levels of influence and money see all of these resources leveraged to

get a better education than other students<sup>321</sup>. Higher education, for many of Russia's new elite, is not a key part of human capital formation, nor is it essential in establishing a future career. After graduation, the inheritance of positions among bureaucrats has become almost a fact of life<sup>322</sup>, which means that elite students can now count on a guaranteed position after graduation without needing earn it through competition. In the Soviet Union direct family inheritance of prestigious occupations was uncommon. In fact, families did ensure that their children were provided for in the state apparatus, but at a much, much lower rank - five or six levels lower than their parents<sup>323</sup>. This high level behavior contrasts with the expectations of average high school students, who still believe, before they enter a university, that effort and achievement would lead to success<sup>324</sup>. Even though everyday corruption can be somewhat hidden from one's children before they reach university age, it is impossible to do this completely. This effect is compounded by the corrupting effect of a corrupt university<sup>325</sup>. The human capital effects of corrupt selection independent of socialization can be similarly damaging.

The implications of corrupt selection practices are directly felt in terms of both human capital and institutional effectiveness. Selection corruption violates an essential characteristic of elite universities - the objective selection of the most qualified students by the most competitive institutions. By selecting potentially non-competitive students in favor of those with the ability to bribe or influence, the overall reputation of the university logically suffers, as might the career prospects of its graduates. Exceptional levels of training could potentially compensate for the admission of otherwise less-accomplished students. This view, however, is mitigated by a very important part of human capital's relation to higher education - training.

The value of training in enhancing human capital could increase the overall human capital value of graduates, even if less qualified candidates are chosen for admission. The Michigan Law example demonstrates that in certain situations, even students that are admitted in a preferential manner still are able to achieve levels of human capital no less than that of their peers. However, the process of corrupt selection has a qualitatively different nature than affirmative action - not so much righting what was perceived to be a social injustice or increasing access for the less affluent, but selling the social prestige of an elite institution outright with the risk of destroying the value of what is being sold. Whereas training is unaffected by selection alone, its effectiveness is undermined by unprepared students. Those selected by corrupt means are often less prepared and less motivated than their peers, which would cause them to require a great deal of remedial instruction. Furthermore, the human capital signaling function, which supposedly guarantees a basic valuation of a student's capabilities, is completely undermined by selection corruption. This contention, however, is only true if a university functions in an objectively unbiased and effective way.

#### **7.4.) Mitigation**

Selection corruption could be interpreted as a means of leveling the playing field for Russian entrants so as to better account for inequalities in the Russian secondary and primary education systems. For example, a student who has no opportunity to enter a proper university because of insufficient educational preparation still has a need to advance herself, and corruption could provide that means. Even if the Russian selection system worked without bias or corruption, there is still no guarantee that it would only accept the most deserving applicants. Secondary schools across the country are in various states of disrepair,



and there is no minimum level of guaranteed academic achievement. University entrance exams may fall far from the ideal of providing accurate evaluations of a student's capabilities. Regular families could leverage all of their resources in an attempt to propel their most promising children to new heights of social status and professional success in a way that would be otherwise unthinkable if the system functioned properly. If the Michigan example is applicable to Russian institutions, then this method of accessibility would be a truly positive method for increasing access to higher education to traditionally underrepresented groups (those that lacked either the luck of living in a capital city or belonging to an influential family). This optimistic view of corruption, although appealing at times, is not always supported by the facts. Corrupt access is regulated by levels of entrenched influence and wealth, which is as exclusive as any institutional insufficiency. This distinction is especially clear when corruption is compared to reform measures that seek to increase access.

#### 7.4.1.) EGE Description

The recently adopted unified state examination, the EGE, demonstrates both the presence and the dangers of the traditional selection system. The primary impact of the EGE is twofold: the standardization of academic evaluation criteria and the centralization of admissions evaluation. The test, prepared in Moscow, serves as a way to prevent favoritism and otherwise dishonest influence that is brought to bear via selection committees<sup>326</sup>. This step, considered radical by many in the thoroughly conservative educational establishment, has been widely criticized by educators, but praised by many policy makers. The World Bank and OECD prescribed a similar policy for the Russian Federation in 1999, which appears to

have been realized in a particularly Russian way<sup>327</sup>. By looking at the effects of the EGE and reactions to its implementation, the broader picture of selection corruption becomes clear.

The adoption of the EGE was intended to improve educational access to students in less-developed regions of Russia and to clean up admissions corruption. By leveling the playing field in terms of academic requirements, less well-equipped institutions can still prepare their students to enter an institute of higher education due to standardized testing requirements. In this sense, location, familiarization with specific universities' tests and social contact with selection committees would have far less influence than before. The EGE's main characteristic, multiple-choice questions, allows for a very fast and quantifiable evaluation of one student's academic abilities in comparison to others, and it also allows for students to be tested on the same material all across the country. This kind of standardization allows for reducing the role of local institutions in misrepresenting students' achievement via their own substandard evaluation standards and local educational corruption.

In another important regard, the EGE allows for students to avoid paying the high cost of traveling to a distant capital city in order to take university-specific exams, thereby removing a major barrier to less affluent students entering Russia's most prestigious institutions. This advance in educational policy, however, is not without its detractors.

#### 7.4.2.) EGE Criticisms

The EGE has been widely and comprehensively criticized by the Russian educational establishment. After it was announced, a majority of Russian higher educational institutions categorically opposed the EGE for a variety of reasons<sup>328</sup>. Examples of such uniform condemnation of this reform persist today<sup>329</sup>, and they can be remarkably severe in

character<sup>330</sup>. First of all, the Russian educational establishment seems to be categorically opposed to any reform effort<sup>331 332</sup>, going so far as to having 79% of academic experts condemn any new reforms<sup>333</sup>, even the emergence of private universities<sup>334</sup>. In fact it appears that the Russian higher educational administration is determined to "wall itself off from modern times"<sup>335</sup>. A 2006-2007 poll of Russian students also displays high levels of cynicism in this regard<sup>336</sup>. These consistently high levels of resistance seem surprising when considering the nature of specific complaints regarding the EGE.

Specific criticisms of the EGE are for reasons that often appear to be very generalized, purely technical and highly esoteric. One of the most popular criticisms of the EGE is that it is simply too large of a task to be undertaken<sup>337</sup>, an unacceptably complicated logistic challenge. Another major criticism is that the questions are actually too specific or too mundane<sup>338</sup>. In a more internationally familiar sense, the EGE raises the objection among educators that the multiple-choice format is an inadequate type of evaluation<sup>339</sup>, and that it forces "teaching to the test" instead of a more traditional, humanistic approach<sup>340</sup>. Another criticism is that the EGE devalues secondary education, since grades count for less than the results of this one test<sup>341</sup>. An unexpectedly candid EGE criticism is reinforced by students and teachers complaining that the test is simply too hard, and that otherwise exceptional students get scores that are too low<sup>342 343</sup>. This point of view is supported by the thousands of students who ended up failing the test in 2009, despite regularly receiving the high grades in high school<sup>344</sup>. Even such a prominent figure as President Medvedev weighed in on the EGE, describing its results as problematic<sup>345</sup>. This list of complaints is complicated by accusations of wrongdoing in the test itself.

Accusations of corruption and dishonesty in the EGE are common. Many educators and administrators have complained about recent EGE testing scandals, where it was alleged that widespread cell-phone cheating was allowed or that test results could be purchased<sup>346</sup>. Just such a scandal was noted in the province of Tatarstan, where two officials and rectors were accused of selling EGE answers<sup>347</sup>. In the most recent round of EGE testing, there was a major scandal about the test being corrupted in the region of Dagestan; a scandal erupted when it was revealed that four times as many students took the EGE in that region than were graduated from the region's high schools<sup>348 349</sup>. Anecdotal evidence from other sources about the ability of students to cheat openly and even buy exams is plentiful<sup>350</sup>. In this regard, the EGE is interpreted as a major source of potential corruption, engendering the very problem that it should resolve. In a particularly telling perspective, however, many educational elites are perceived as criticizing the EGE for the very reason it could be effective: that it substantially reduces corruption and limits bribes to educational elites<sup>351</sup>. What is interesting about many of these criticisms is that the existing system exhibits many of these same characteristics.

Almost all criticisms of the EGE can effectively be leveled at the previous system. The university-specific system was a massive and cumbersome logistical undertaking that never allowed students to accurately prepare for entrance exams. Teaching to the test couldn't be done in the old system, which is one way that the EGE presents different challenges. However, this is because individual university testing requirements weren't uniform, nor could they be predicted in detail. The objection of how the EGE devalues the secondary education system is also present, since many average students completely disregard their

grades so as to best prepare for specific college and entrance exams<sup>352</sup>. Other objections are based on the rumored corruption of the EGE<sup>353</sup>. Such charges are in no small supply in the current system, as presented in the previous section. In terms of the objections involving corruption and the ability to cheat, such possibilities are abundant in the current system to such a degree that a reform like the EGE was necessary. One critic admitted that despite myriad shortcomings of the EGE, it is still better than the previous system<sup>354</sup>. Students and academics have also noted that despite the EGE's problems, the system it replaced was far more troubled<sup>355 356</sup>. In order to best understand the validity of these criticisms, it is also essential to understand their broader context.

Many criticisms of the EGE are either completely manufactured or serve as telling examples of the test's effectiveness. In terms of corruptibility, there are anecdotal accounts of how Russian elites are frustrated with their newfound inability to engage in selection corruption to ensure their children's admission<sup>357</sup>. In another example, a major objection to the EGE by students is that the test is actually far too difficult<sup>358</sup>. As many as 25% of students who take the test end up failing, despite their high school grades<sup>359</sup>. One group of students noted that the test was unfair, because it was too hard to cheat on it<sup>360</sup>. Anti-cheating practices are used, such as regularly checking the restroom in order to force cheaters back into the testing hall<sup>361</sup> and disrupt the practice of texting friends and family for help during the test<sup>362</sup>. Some students from capital cities actually criticize the test due to the fact that it disadvantages them by leveling the playing field for less privileged students<sup>363 364</sup>. This kind of criticism also is leveled at the evaluative capabilities of the test itself.

The overall weakness of EGE opposition demonstrates that opposition to the test many not be purely on educational grounds. In one particularly telling episode, a recent class that was admitted in Fall of 2009 to MGU Zhurfak (journalism school), was publicly criticized by their professor for horribly failing a basic diagnostic exam - the worst result in twenty years. This episode was remarkable, because so many of those that failed actually had remarkable EGE results, even though mistakes were found in nearly every single word and phrase. Such a scandal suddenly took on a massive scale and was used as a prime example of the EGE's ineffectiveness in determining the value of aspiring students. As it later turned out, the professor of this class made up the entire episode, feeling that the original results were so outstanding that her class had no value for her students<sup>365 366</sup>. The ferocity with which the test is criticized by the educational establishment, combined with the weakness of these very criticisms leads one to conclude that these individuals may not be attacking this reform for an objective reason. Furthermore, despite relentless criticism from the educational establishment, the EGE appears to have been successful in reducing selection corruption<sup>367</sup>. The areas where the EGE seems to be limited are in its inability to reduce labor market corruption<sup>368</sup> and non-selection corruption, which may mitigate its effectiveness in comprehensively resolving Russian higher educational corruption.

#### 7.4.3.) EGE Effectiveness

The EGE has effectively and beneficially restructured the way that university admissions are undertaken. Most universities now look primarily to the EGE in order to determine the candidacy of a given student, with some even taking the unprecedented step of ignoring the influence and wealth of a student's parents<sup>369</sup>. This trend has increased access to

elite higher education for students of the more remote regions of Russia<sup>370</sup>. Furthermore, the ability of students to apply to multiple universities around the country has allowed for a much broader selection of students<sup>371</sup>. This new level of access has allowed for universities to be visibly ranked in terms of competitiveness and desirability among students in an unprecedented way. These advantages were recently confirmed in a radio interview with a Moscow professor, who noted that students from the regions of Russia with high EGE scores were exceptional students, but local Muscovites were entirely unmotivated and very prone to cheat or bribe<sup>372</sup>. Even with its positive results, universities can still have some influence in determining the admissions to certain special faculties.

The introduction of the EGE has greatly reduced the influence of a given university in determining the criteria for admissions while allowing for some flexibility. With many prestigious universities, additional university exams are required for specialized faculties. At the prestigious capital institutions, SPbGU and MGU, the economics, law, medicine and journalism faculties all require one additional exam to evaluate a student's specialized knowledge, which is written and administered by the university. The olympiad results for individual students, the country-wide academic competition that guarantees access to higher education, represent a third means of determining admissions qualifications<sup>373</sup>. In the case of Saint Petersburg's renowned FINEK university, many students were admitted in 2009 without serious consideration of the EGE scores, but based on their special status and olympiad results<sup>374</sup>. Unfortunately, shocking score discrepancies<sup>375</sup>, rumors of corruption and bribery undermine the reliability of the olympiad<sup>376</sup>. Despite this exception, university selection committees have far less room to arbitrarily influence admissions decisions, and the EGE is

the primary means by which selection is determined<sup>377</sup>. The EGE has truly accomplished a significant reduction in selection corruption in the Russian Federation<sup>378</sup>. However, selection corruption still exists in different forms<sup>379 380</sup>.

The EGE's effectiveness can be seen in shifts in corrupt behavior. According to contemporary Russian educational experts, the EGE has completely disrupted the old system of corrupt selection<sup>381</sup>. State bureaucrats and other privileged elites are extremely frustrated that their clout and corruption suddenly can no longer guarantee their children an elite higher education<sup>382</sup>. In a typically market-driven way, the introduction of the EGE appears to have led to increased secondary and primary education corruption, so as to ensure the best possible preparation for one's children<sup>383</sup>. A significant recent development in corruption practices is that parents have started to give up on bribing their kids' way through the EGE, realizing that doing so is very unreliable. Instead, they have started to increase bribing at other levels, so that their children can get the best possible preparation - beginning as early as kindergarten<sup>384</sup>. In fact, this effect is so pronounced that university bribes have dropped by 21%, whereas kindergartens have become "hotbeds of corruption on an unheard of scale," leading to the creation of an entire kindergarten corruption market and the establishment of kindergarten corruption hotlines in Moscow and Saint Petersburg<sup>385</sup>.

Furthermore, the fact that many straight-A students fail the exam can be interpreted as demonstrating either the inability of schools to provide for students' basic academic needs or how cheating and bribery activity do not translate to EGE success. This trend can be seen in how many winners of nationwide "olympiad" student competitions for university entry actually earn highly uncompetitive EGE scores<sup>386</sup>. In another example, a new kind of



attempt at selection corruption has emerged - falsely applying for special needs status<sup>387 388</sup>.

In some Moscow universities, entire faculties are full of students that have been officially classified as disabled or having "special needs"<sup>389</sup>. The advantage of such status is that one does not have to take the EGE with other students, granting a university the opportunity to admit a student based on non-EGE factors. This practice only adds another component in a corrupt transaction - a corrupt doctor that will attest to one's physical inability in the same way that he would for someone trying to avoid the highly unpopular Russian draft. These developments demonstrate not only that selection corruption can be fought, but that it is a very widespread and resilient phenomenon.

## **8.) GRADING CORRUPTION**

### **8.1.) Identification and Definition Adherence**

Grading corruption comprehensively fits any definition of corruption. This is a voluntary act by a professor or student to receive or issue grades that have been influenced by something other than academic merit. This can be from many different sides, either a student bribing for a better grade or a passing grade, or the more stunning rent-seeking behavior on the part of professors for an honest or non-failing grade. This meets the voluntary requirement, in the sense that it cannot be initiated without the voluntary behavior of students or the professor. This kind of practice should be distinguished from the overall grade inflation, which was present in the Soviet Union<sup>390</sup> and today. Academic professionals were under pressure to demonstrate the effectiveness of their institutions or protect the reputation of a student's prestigious family and thereby inflated grades to meet expectations<sup>391</sup>. This kind of activity was hidden, internal and was rarely the result of a corrupt student-teacher interaction, so much as one of a teacher with a corrupt administration. However, it had a similar effect to modern grading corruption in that it undermined the institution by using the institution's clout and authority to illegitimately verify the academic ability of an undeserving student.

### **8.2.) Methods and Examples**

#### **8.2.1.) Supply Side Corruption**

Grading corruption is the awarding of illegitimate grades to undeserving students for bribes or other gifts, which represents a special kind of supply-side corruption. The standard reasons for grading corruption are often cited: teachers are too poor, universities need the

extra money, that the transition period socialized corrupt behavior and so forth. However, the essential difference between grading corruption's supply and that of other kinds of corruption is the corrupt transaction itself. Grading corruption can occur on an individual level, without the overarching corrupt organizations that are necessary for selection corruption and financial corruption. An individual teacher can make a decision to either extort their students or not, depending on their own moral decision and set of incentives. By identifying problem students and offering to pass them for a bribe, while leaving successful students alone, a professor can tailor corrupt practices to her audience. This level of autonomy speaks to the individual motives of professors to engage in corruption and the degree to which students feel free to resist or comply.

Grading corruption is a regrettably common practice in the Russian Federation's higher education system. As many as 39% of Russian students have admitted to receiving grades dishonestly<sup>392</sup>. In another poll, anywhere from 11-19% of Russians have admitted to paying bribes for admission or grades<sup>393</sup>. This number appears low, since as many as 25% of students are ready to bribe for grades<sup>394</sup>. In terms of instructor willingness to accept bribes, the proportion fluctuates by region from 27-35%<sup>395</sup>. Such results appear to mark a significant increase from 2004, where 10% of instructors regularly accepted bribes<sup>396</sup>. This high level demonstrates that despite inconsistent levels of reported grading corruption, it can appear as a systemic phenomenon.

The organization present in highly developed grading corruption schemes demonstrates that such an illegitimate practice can be realized as a systemic phenomenon. Grading corruption is often coordinated across departments or universities<sup>397</sup>. The most

popular classes for grading corruption are bothersome, seemingly unnecessary prerequisites<sup>398</sup>, such as basic math in a literature program or literature in an engineering program. The degree to which this system is developed is truly profound and even demonstrates the emergence of micro-markets of corruption. There are widespread systems of middlemen, often recruited students, who are capable of acting as couriers for corrupt grading transactions<sup>399</sup>. Furthermore, there are even hidden “price lists” that are circulated among student groups that list the going rates for certain grades in certain classes<sup>400</sup>. Other professors are more blatant in their corruption, announcing their price lists during lectures on the eve of final exams<sup>401</sup>. In some institutions, there are pricing incentives given to students to pay reduced bribes for guaranteeing good grades at the beginning of the semester, as opposed to being forced to pay closer to finals<sup>402</sup>. In some higher educational institutions, students who resist the corrupt grading scheme are forced to leave<sup>403</sup>. This completely subverted system of grading and its massive scale are particularly harmful for future student development, especially in the realm of producing students who are ready to engage in future corruption.

#### 8.2.2.) Demand side Corruption

Whereas supply-side corruption represents the corruptibility of a system, demand side grading corruption serves as an indicator of the degree of socialized corruption among students. The concept of demand-side corruption is that the primary corrupting influence and request for corrupt activity comes from the party without authority. Students act on their own initiative to offer a bribe to professors, who may or may not be already engaging in corrupt behavior of their own. It has been estimated that students are responsible for initiating one

half of all corruption transactions<sup>404</sup>. This is supported by a 2009 study, in which nearly half of Russian students were predicted to buy their exams, potentially creating nearly \$150 million in bribes<sup>405</sup>. The reasons for demand-side grading corruption are significant in the sense that they represent similar pressures, but from unique perspectives. The most common and cynical reason that students engage in corruption is that they simply cannot be bothered to undergo the necessary rigor of properly learning course material. Some students feel a sense of entitlement or simply disregard academic standards to the degree that they readily bribe their professors. In this sense, corrupt student behavior has been sufficiently socialized to the point that they decide to resolve their conflicts by applying corrupt tactics instead of redoubling honest efforts in an honest environment. Even if their behavior isn't sufficiently socialized to routinize corrupt behavior, the perception of corruptibility makes such behavior at least worth a risk. This kind of behavior is reinforced by families, of which 50% are ready to engage in bribery to resolve everyday education issues<sup>406</sup>, which coincidentally parallels the figure of 50-60% of Russian students that are estimated to regularly participate in grading corruption<sup>407</sup>. This is an interesting figure, since according to MVD estimates, students initiate corrupt transactions in 50% of all cases<sup>408</sup>. In some cases, however, students can be compelled by systemic pressures to engage in grading corruption.

Systemic pressures can force students to engage in bribery in two different ways. The first of these ways is a lack of time and financial pressure due to the high cost of living and studying. Students take on demanding work schedules<sup>409</sup>, and due to scarce time, financial priorities often win out, and students are forced to skip large numbers of classes on a regular basis in order to earn enough money to support themselves<sup>410</sup>. Due to this, and a lack of time

to sufficiently prepare for final exams and write papers, students are forced to try to meet their academic obligations via bribery<sup>411</sup>. Another systemic pressure for Russian students is that their professors and classes can be hopelessly disorganized or excessively demanding<sup>412</sup>, which prevents students from properly preparing to meet their evaluation requirements. Professorial misconduct and poor lesson planning can frustrate even the most sincere efforts to earn academic credentials, as can unrealistically difficult final exams that are required by unqualified professors. One example of this situation is where a student's exam was marked down unfairly, since the grading professor actually did not properly understand the material herself<sup>413</sup>. It should be noted that from the student's perspective, all professor-initiated corruption is systemic, since it shapes the microsocial systems that this corruption occurs in. In its own way, this perception of universal corruption can compel students to utilize grading corruption as a means of remaining competitive with other students that bribe<sup>414</sup>. The nature of grading corruption is not always that of a financial transaction, since certain academic professionals may display partial treatment for far less attractive incentives.

### 8.2.3.) Soft Corruption

Grading corruption that is accomplished without financial outlays and without influence peddling can be referred to as "soft corruption." Non-monetary forms of corruption may be more prevalent in higher education than old fashioned bribery<sup>415</sup>. In terms of selection corruption, the potential reward is so great, that major influence or bribery is required, but on individual exams, something less compelling can be sufficient. In situations where rent-seeking isn't actively applied, teachers can be swayed to change student grades due to low-cost gifts or other reasons. In fact, it is legal for professors and administrators to

receive gifts that cost less than 500 RUR<sup>416</sup>. In many cases, students provide the standard gifts to their professors at the end of the year, such as chocolates, champagne, cognac or flowers in order to sway their opinion<sup>417 418</sup>. For certain professors, this is enough to guarantee a good grade, or at least leniency<sup>419</sup>. Favoritism or favorable biases towards supplicant students also changes grades, but for different reasons<sup>420</sup>. A professor could be the source of such corruption by giving a student the opportunity to re-take an exam, impartially grading them each time. Professors often will agree to that for no bribe at all<sup>421</sup>. Thus, there are potential human capital implications for grading corruption, even if it doesn't involve financial bribery.

Some teachers actively help their students to cheat, or they simply cannot bear to give them a bad grade. This has been identified in many cases, especially in a recent exam format experiment. When the traditional “Russian” method was used to administer exams, widespread cheating and grade inflation was noted. But, when the “European” method was used – checking for cheaters, actually punishing cheaters, using anonymous exam grading and having someone other than the regular teacher administer the exam produced fundamentally different results<sup>422</sup>. The essential conclusion by observers was that Russian teachers develop a sentimentality towards their own students over a semester, which allows a great deal of permissiveness during exams and very lenient grading<sup>423</sup>. Such behavior was also observed by a prominent radio announcer, when her teacher helped her cheat in chemistry and math on graduate exams<sup>424</sup>. In another case, some professors had grown so attached to their students by the end of the semester that they announce to everyone that everyone would pass no matter what<sup>425</sup>. Other professors have policies of never giving students the equivalent of a "D"<sup>426</sup>.

This kind of grade changing for purely sentimental reasons is important, because it gives no tangible private benefit as a bribe would, yet it is still seen as corrupt. However, not all grading corruption is necessarily in the positive direction.

Negative sentimental grading corruption is also an unfortunate feature of Russian higher education. Professors have been known to arbitrarily reduce the grades of some students without explanation. The difficulty in analyzing this question or even including it in a discussion of corruption at all is that it is hard to firmly identify it in practice. Negative sentimental corruption can be a mistaken form of extortion if a student does not want to or know how to bribe. However, there is some compelling anecdotal evidence. As mentioned before in the EGE discussion, one professor arbitrarily reduced the grades of her students. This was done, because her students' results were actually so phenomenal that they had no need to study her subject<sup>427 428</sup>. Unfortunately, other similar stories are found in the personal histories of many recent graduates and current students of Russian universities. A student illegitimately receiving an inflated or deflated grade has the same effects regardless of the source. Teachers approving widespread cheating or deciding to provide undeserving grades on their own initiative produces the exact same results as widespread bribery.

### **8.3.) Implications**

Grading corruption, possibly more than any other type of higher educational corruption in Russia, can shock Western observers, since it undermines the fundamental purpose and value of higher education. The essential function of a university is to transmit knowledge and verify this transmission to anonymous parties, guaranteeing the quality of graduates via official degrees. When grading corruption is present, no knowledge



transmission is necessary, only a simple payment, and a student is validated as demonstrating accomplishment. This kind of corruption strikes at the heart of both areas of university education's role in human capital development and further socializes corrupt behavior.

#### 8.3.1.) Socializing corruption

Socializing corrupt behavior is elevated to a new level by grading corruption. By constantly exposing students to threats, rent-seeking behavior or simply giving them the opportunity to finally profit from corruption instead of suffer from it, the unavoidable and constant presence of grading corruption is uniquely harmful among other corruption types. Students look to teachers as models of future behavior, and when confronted with corruption, they can readily become corrupt themselves<sup>429</sup>. Selection corruption is a one-time affair, and financial corruption neither requires student participation nor does it allow regular student observation. By immersing students in a corrupt system of academic extortion and illegitimacy, they can develop habits specifically in relation to corruption and ultimately can adapt to survival in a profoundly corrupt professional environment. Even if not completely socialized, students can thoroughly adapt themselves to a corrupt environment, which makes such behavior far easier in the future. In this case, not only do students advance in terms of corruption via selection, but they come to rely on it as a regular mechanism of success. This kind of behavior could easily be applied at the workplace by engaging in corrupt market practices. Victims, corrupting students, and grading corruption middlemen could all later come to engage in widespread corruption in order to realize even the most rudimentary personal goals, at the expense of an honest application of their skills.

### 8.3.2.) Training

The undermining of a university's evaluation quality and verification fundamentally subverts its functions to the detriment of human capital via falsely verifying training. Regardless of demand-side or supply-side corruption, grading corruption severely de-incentivizes academic accomplishment and honest work, preventing effective learning<sup>430</sup>. By forcing students to pay for their grades in any situation, a student stands to benefit without serious exertion. Therefore, given even a purely rational perspective, a student's short-term goals are easily met via bribery, if there is even a choice to be made. In the case of rent-seeking, teachers can make no effort to teach or even come to class, thereby completely abandoning the course and their students. This kind of behavior actively denies important knowledge transmission and verification to students, leaving them worse equipped to deal with the technical and skill requirements of their future professions. Even though skills are neglected by grading corruption, the precise human capital implications of such a phenomenon are vague, due to the low practical value of Russian higher education curricula and the overwhelming value of on-the-job training in terms of skill acquisition – 90% from one's job and only 10% from other sources<sup>431</sup>. Despite the uncertain harmful effects of allowing the neglectful treatment of students to cause skill deprivation atrophy, the appearance of institutional approval via grades carries its own consequences in the labor market.

### 8.3.3.) Signaling

Grading corruption's effects on university credibility fundamentally harms Russian human capital via false signaling. Since a fundamental role of education is the accurate

signaling of the potential value of a graduate to the labor market, grade corruption severely distorts the ability of employers to understand signals<sup>432 433</sup>. In fact, the relative prestige of an academic degree assumes an unbiased attestation of academic ability. Companies all over the Russian Federation and the world give graduates from elite universities special consideration when hiring, and Russian universities have been recently ranked in based mostly on career opportunities. These universities, subsequently, are the most selective, which supposes a higher degree of qualification for their students and graduates. Selection corruption undermines the notion that the best candidates are selected, but grading corruption ensures that graduates are not truly worthy of the elite degrees that they have supposedly earned, thereby mitigating the potential benefits of institutional influence on future student performance and behavior as with Michigan Law. Whereas the deficiencies presented by selection corruption could theoretically be compensated for with superior training and positive institutional influence on a student's soft skills, grading corruption prevents this entirely.

Non-corrupt higher education signaling is essential for many firms in determining the value of a potential employee. Whereas productive training and hard skill formation is mostly undertaken on the job, identifying candidates is mostly done via either interpersonal connections or looking to academic qualifications. This kind of selection is based on the assumption that the best graduates show the most potential to gain from training and to effectively contribute to the organization. Provided that this perspective is a real representation of a person's labor value, then grading corruption specifically creates a misallocation of human resources within an economy, thereby losing value due to inefficiency. This also prevents any consistent valuation policy based on a university's

prestige, since there is no clear way to tell whether a graduate has necessary skills or not. Furthermore, once a university is perceived as being corrupt, it actually begins to send out negative signals to the labor market<sup>434</sup>. Considering these implications, it is essential to examine measures that are taken to reduce the impacts of grading corruption.

#### **8.4.) Mitigation**

The practice of grading corruption may be exaggerated. Despite earlier figures, there are not many students that have encountered supply-side grading corruption - only 8.2%<sup>435</sup>. In this regard, perhaps the students are providing the impetus, which may lead to a corresponding corruption of the system itself. However, there is another view of students who see grading corruption as fundamentally immoral and condemnable<sup>436</sup>. Furthermore, much as EGE corruption accusations may be the product of disgruntled corruptors that could not influence the system, grading corruption could be the target of similar behavior. Some accusations of corruption have been leveled by some students who actively use perceptions of corruption to their own advantage by fabricating stories of professorial misconduct as a way to rationalize a perceived unjust grade<sup>437</sup>. Regardless of potential inaccuracies in measuring the true levels of grading corruption, society has moved to try and police it.

#### **8.5.) Anti-Corruption**

Russian corruption, for all its ubiquity, does not exist in a vacuum, and anti-corruption efforts are widespread. There are many methods that have been adopted for fighting Russian corruption, ranging from creating hotlines to launching massively publicized anti-corruption campaigns. However, the effectiveness of such measures has been questionable. A fundamental objection to overall anti-corruption efforts is that there has been too much

attention paid to low-level, everyday corruption, which ignores the more serious cases of high-level corruption<sup>438</sup>. This is despite the fact that most Russians see corruption as most prevalent and inexcusable among high-level officials<sup>439</sup>. In another sense, a blanket approach towards policing corruption in higher education won't be fully effective, since the relationship between student and professor is more nuanced than that of a citizen and a bureaucrat. Furthermore, it should be noted that ant-corruption efforts in Russia have not been directed at student cheating so much as policing the actions of professors and administrators, so this examination will only address the behavior of those in positions of authority.

#### 8.5.1.) Description and Effectiveness

The most common methods of fighting corruption in developed nations - public activity and official punishment - have been used in the Russian Federation. There are a wide variety of standard methods of detecting and arresting corrupt actors, with varying uses and methods of reporting<sup>440</sup>. In some cases, professors or administrators are arrested and prosecuted<sup>441</sup>, occasionally in significant numbers<sup>442</sup>. In some areas of the country, like Vladimir and Penze, there have been highly publicized cases of professors being arrested for student extortion<sup>443</sup>. In another case, student resistance at Moscow State University and appeals to the Russian parliament resulted in the closing of a cafeteria that was run by the dean's son, which charged outrageous prices<sup>444</sup>. Such popular resistance can also be seen with the establishment of a website, "vzjatkam.net," in 2006 as a response to ineffective government policies<sup>445</sup>. The website has since been shut down.

Unfortunately, the number of professors and academic professionals investigated for corruption falls far, far short of the estimated 30%-40% who regularly take bribes<sup>446</sup>, despite

the fact that such investigations increased by 50% from 2008-2009<sup>447</sup>. This number rarely exceeds one hundred, possibly due to the enforcement procedures. In another example, a recent MVD anti-corruption effort in higher education, "Образование - 2009," only 97 instances of bribery were revealed<sup>448</sup>. The standard procedure is difficult to apply regularly, since in order to prove corruption, a willing student must come forward and provide substantial proof, which is a rare occurrence<sup>449</sup>. This is further complicated by the law that professors are able to receive gifts of less than 3,000 RUR<sup>450</sup>, which may be close to the market price for an exam bribe. Therefore, the only way to catch a professor is to do it either in the act itself or as the result of accepting a mass bribe for an entire class<sup>451</sup>. This system has been the subject of a great deal of criticism.

#### 8.5.2.) Criticisms

Traditional methods of punitive anti-corruption measures are very unsuccessful in reducing large-scale corruption in the Russian Federation. A major source of the failure of anti-corruption efforts is the lack of participation by victims in terms of hotlines and reports of corruption. At one university where exam bribery is ubiquitous, the corruption hotline is completely unused<sup>452</sup>. Unfortunately, most anti-corruption campaigns are one-time only and lack the necessary longevity in order to be effective<sup>453</sup>. Another drawback of this system is that it requires catching someone in the act, which is a very rare occurrence<sup>454</sup>. Sentencing for a corrupt offense is very difficult due to middlemen and legal covers<sup>455</sup>. One must establish a clear causal connection between the bribe and the result, and prosecution is very easy to avoid<sup>456</sup>. One major reason for the lack of significant success is the necessary participation of observers<sup>457</sup>. An additional problem could be intimidation. Many victims or

participants in corrupt activity rightly fear retaliation, leading to a lack of information and prosecution<sup>458 459 460</sup>. In another sense, many students and other "victims" of corruption may be interested in the perpetuation of a system that they see as benefiting their interests<sup>461</sup>.

Another problem is the ineffectiveness of internal policing policies. In the area of dissertation and doctoral degrees, despite widely perceived perceptions only one percent of dissertations are rejected on the basis of plagiarism<sup>462</sup>. Traditional anti-corruption efforts take a centralized stance on policing corruption, which can simply lead to a redistribution of corrupt authority, while falsely claiming success<sup>463</sup>. As mentioned earlier, anti-corruption efforts often focus on low-level actors, leaving higher functionaries untouched. Recent anti-corruption efforts confirmed this trend in 2004 and 2005<sup>464</sup>. The typical professor who was arrested took a small bribe for an exam, but there are almost no accounts of arrests being made for accepting a 40,000 Euro bribe for entering a law school. In recent years, the number of investigations launched against corrupt higher education professionals has often been between 65 and 100<sup>465</sup>. Another difficulty posed by the current punitive system is that those caught in corrupt deals can escape without punishment and professional repercussions for bribery offenses<sup>466 467</sup> and professional misconduct. Even when those caught are appropriately punished and removed from their positions, corrupt hierarchies persist<sup>468</sup>.

### 8.5.3.) Effectiveness

Many anti-corruption efforts can be counterproductive. A classic, cynical use of social perceptions of corruption is to protect oneself from investigation by characterizing anti-corruption efforts as corrupt themselves<sup>469</sup>. This practice can be seen throughout former-communist countries, and are considered de rigueur in the Russian Federation. President

Medvedev's recent anti-corruption initiative in 2008 has been characterized as fundamentally corrupt and questionable<sup>470</sup>. The EGE is another excellent example of such a phenomenon. Despite the fact that it is being advanced by the central ministries of education and science, it has been vigorously opposed in every possible way by a majority of universities<sup>471</sup>. Internal policing of corrupt activity can be ineffective, since profiting hierarchies aren't interested in reducing their income<sup>472</sup>. Corruption within enforcement agencies can also prevent effective anti-corruption measures<sup>473</sup>. Even when one part of the organization may function correctly, another may then cover up for the accused corrupt actor. The example of krugi becomes especially important in this regard. Overlapping connections that include policing organizations can provide other corrupt actors with an opportunity to both enhance their own influence and to protect themselves by exchanging their own access. In this sense, system-wide corruption, such as is found in Russia, could easily be considered self-protecting and self-renewing, even in the face of widespread anti-corruption initiatives<sup>474</sup>. Many corrupt university administrations and coordinators of corruption protect their subordinates and complicit students from investigation<sup>475</sup>. In another example, some corrupt bureaucrats simply aren't interested in prosecuting corruption, since they have already completely internalized and rationalized it to themselves<sup>476</sup>.

In another broader model of anti-corruption efforts, an overly severe and punishment-oriented policy could lead to greater corruption, as seen with the Soviet model of fighting corruption<sup>477</sup>. This kind of blanket authority to ruthlessly combat corruption appeals to citizens who feel powerless but often leads to abuse of authority and arbitrariness<sup>478</sup>. The unfortunate result of such a situation is that citizens feel that corruption is "invincible"<sup>479</sup>.



Unfortunately, the inability of basic policing policies to prevent corruption may lead to even more damaging instances of corrupt activity.

## **9.) ACCREDITATION CORRUPTION**

### **9.1.) Identification and Definition Adherence**

Accreditation corruption stands apart from other forms of Russian higher education corruption in specific ways. Professional schools such as law schools and medical schools provide accreditation to graduates in Russia, as opposed to the United States, where the ABA and AMA can provide medical licenses and law licenses to professionals. Accreditation boards, functioning like selection boards, can choose to grant licenses due to bribery or other illegitimate considerations. Like grading and selection corruption, there are two sides to this kind of corrupt activity, but attention will be focused on the act of issuing licenses to undeserving candidates.

### **9.2.) Methods and Examples**

Accreditation corruption occurs in a simple way that does not strongly differ from previous types of corruption. Aspiring professionals or graduates simply find a means to approach a corrupt review board member or intermediary and then determine the best means of bribery so that they can get their license to practice. The mechanisms described in previous sections for selection corruption are applicable here as well, with the most popular being simple bribery. Some medical students go through their entire university education without ever honestly taking a single exam, preferring to bribe or cheat exclusively<sup>480</sup>. This fact is surprising for the simple reason that doctors are notoriously underpaid in Russia, and many look at medicine as only a profitable profession in the sense that someone could extort bribes from suffering patients. Law schools, on the other hand, are higher up on the list of targets for corrupt entry<sup>481 482</sup>, and they provide greater promises of potential material success. This

trend is not helped by the lack of an impartial legal accreditation organization, like the ABA in the United States<sup>483</sup>. This condition is exacerbated by the massive number of professional schools that have appeared since the end of the Soviet Union. Whereas higher education in general has greatly expanded, law schools have expanded from 52 in the Soviet Union to 1147 today<sup>484</sup>. In another regard, the training that occurs at medical schools in Russia is often either unsatisfactory or compromised completely by corruption<sup>485</sup>. Despite poor technical skills and a profound lack of medical knowledge, these graduates are still given licenses and allowed to treat patients<sup>486</sup>. Regardless of corrupt entry into a university and the corrupt grading practices that go on during one's time of study, the issuance of licenses to practice medicine or law without ensuring a recipient's qualifications is a profoundly damaging practice in the Russian Federation.

### **9.3.) Implications**

#### **9.3.1.) Socialization**

For some Russian students, corruption unfortunately touches every aspect of one's academic career, from entry, to grading to the issuing of a professional license. This practice brings the idea of producing corrupt students full circle. Whereas training shortcomings can be mitigated by private sector training, professional schools provide students with practical knowledge that they will apply every day in their later practice. By the end of her education, a medical student could theoretically have earned a diploma that was paid for at every turn without truly applying herself on any occasion. Therefore, she would be lacking in the skills that the state deems necessary in order to practice her profession, and she would have been simultaneously granted the social prestige associated with her university and profession via

pure corruption. This professional validation adds yet another level of corrupt reinforcement and conditioning to an already highly exposed student. The result is a barely-functioning professional who has been thoroughly conditioned to operate only in a corrupt system. This kind of individual is likely interested in the continuation of corruption and corrupt policies as a means of guaranteeing advancement, and also likely aspiring to profit from the same system of corruption that they thrived in from the beginning. Unfortunately, the use of corruption in accreditation and other practices can lead to a damaging lack of essential professional skills.

#### 9.3.2.) Harm via Incompetence and Corruption

Accreditation corruption produces incompetence and a culture of responsibility avoidance that directly harms large numbers of Russian citizens. Among lawyers, doctors and other professionals, skills and ethics are of the utmost importance, otherwise their services would become harmful to consumers. Medical incompetence, unfortunately, is common in the Russian Federation. This fact is backed up by endless anecdotal stories, even though official measurements of this phenomenon are often lacking. One example was how the aunt of a renowned Moscow legal expert was hospitalized for two weeks in intensive care without an accurate diagnosis. As it turns out, the reason why this woman was subjected to such demanding treatment was a single faulty thermometer, which was never checked or replaced by doctors or medical staff<sup>487</sup>. This kind of behavior is not solely the result of a lack of essential skills.

Professional corruption is widespread in the Russian Federation and can render serious harm to the population as a whole. According to surveys and recent national studies, doctors and teachers are considered to be the two most corrupt professions<sup>488</sup>, which may come from

systemic pressures as much as from socialized corruption. In this context, the exact degree to which higher education influences pervasive medical corruption is similarly uncertain.

Doctors and teachers are traditionally employed by the state. State salaries in the Russian Federation are famously inadequate, which could compel all of these professionals to engage in corrupt activity. As in higher education, there are institution-wide systems of organized corruption in state healthcare. The degree to which higher education corruption incentivizes medical students to become corrupt doctors as opposed to being forced to join a corrupt healthcare system is also unclear. However, by the time that medical students have finished their education, they have been thoroughly versed in all the necessary corrupt mechanisms to thrive in such a predatory market.

Not all corruption pressures could be systemic, as evidenced by lawyers. According to a leading professor of Putin's alma mater, the Saint Petersburg State Legal Faculty, effective legal education is key to maintaining the justice system<sup>489</sup>. For lawyers and judges, corruption is doubly harmful, since they are often the only means of reforming a corrupt environment<sup>490</sup>, which may explain why people still trust lawyers, despite consistent reports of corruption. This is especially troubling, since many students enter law school with the explicit intent to unethically manipulate laws to their benefit<sup>491</sup>. This lack of reform potential, which seems to appear before entering a corrupt professional school, may obviate the effects of institutional corruption, since aspiring corrupt actors entering a corrupt system are already socialized by their history of dishonest behavior.

## **10.) ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

### **10.1.) Identification and Definition Adherence**

Academic dishonesty is a problem as old as institutionalized education<sup>492</sup>; however it is now worthy of consideration as a form of corruption. Cheating is often a prolonged, focused effort, designed to produce a singular goal, thereby being voluntary. However, cheating does not require the complicity of an authority or institution. Therefore, it may not actually affect an institution's functioning or professional culture, but it still has the same effects of producing unqualified graduates. The goal, to receive a higher grade by dishonest means, demonstrates its illegitimate nature. Finally, successful cheating undermines the value and role of the institution that contains it by producing graduates that have large amounts of unearned credit and undeservedly high grades. Cheating in this context looks very similar to grading corruption in terms of both intent and implications, but it has two essential differences. First of all, cheating is a one-sided action. Teachers and authorities do not need to be complicit in order for cheaters to be successful and profit from their endeavors. This is the same for both exam cheating and plagiarism. Therefore cheating could produce the same effects as grading corruption, selection corruption and accreditation corruption in an institution that is both perfectly honest, yet unequipped to police cheating effectively.

### **10.2.) Methods and Examples**

#### **10.2.1.) Perceptions and Pervasiveness**

Academic Dishonesty is common in the Russian higher educational system, with a robust history that dates back to the very beginning of Soviet education. Some even go so far as to blame cheating behavior on the legacy of the Soviet Union<sup>493</sup>. Cheating is a significant

cultural phenomenon in modern Russia, and it is considered to be less serious an issue than in the West<sup>494</sup>. In fact, Russians perceive academic dishonesty as a ubiquitous, necessary, forgivable and benign part of education as a whole. This attitude is reflected in many hallmarks of Russian cultural history, famously portrayed in the film *Операция "Ы" и другие приключения Шурика*<sup>495</sup>, (*Operation "Y" and Other Adventures of Shurik*) which has long since become a cornerstone of the Soviet golden era of film. Students would go to extraordinary lengths to ensure their ability to either cheat on tests or to convince the professor to let them by with a passing grade, delighting Soviet audiences with their ingenuity and cunning. Furthermore, this common trend is represented in a recent addition to a Russian university - the "Museum of Cheating." In this museum, the long history of exotic and sophisticated Russian cheating techniques is explored, including a wide variety of cheat sheets - "Шпаргалки" (Shpargalki) or "Шпоры" (Shpory) for short<sup>496</sup>. Cheat sheets have long been a hallmark of Russian and Soviet education<sup>497</sup> - best embodied by the opinion of cheat sheets by a teacher, "without them a student isn't a student"<sup>498</sup>. This kind of attitude is well summarized in a joke about students:

*Finals at the university.*

*The first year student makes cheat sheets in small print and thoroughly hides it in every way.*

*The second year student makes a bigger cheat sheet with bigger print.*

*The third year student has his lecture notes on his knees during the test.*

*The fourth year student has his textbook on his desk during the exam.*

*The fifth year student leafs through the textbook with his professor during the exam, and after trying to point out the answer unsuccessfully several times, he slams the book shut and shouts "Here! Look for the answer yourself!"<sup>499</sup>*

This anecdote demonstrates both the widespread perception of cheating by students and the trend of cheating to grow worse as a student progresses. If such humor were telling of actual behavior, it might serve as a perfect example of the ongoing socialization of corruption within a higher education system. This joke is also a good indicator of the degree to which cheating is observed and expected in Russian universities.

Academic dishonesty in Russian higher education is a pervasive and resilient phenomenon. As many as two thirds of Russians have admitted to cheating during their education, and 95% of Russian students see their friends as cheaters<sup>500</sup>. Despite its ubiquity, it is still an under-examined phenomenon<sup>501</sup>. However, the large amount of experience with cheating and the way that it shapes students to engage in later corrupt activity and game the system rather than thrive in it has been widely observed<sup>502</sup>. Cheating is such a common phenomenon that the methods of its application are diverse and well-developed<sup>503</sup>.

Many cheating methods are accomplished with the help of peer groups and collaboration<sup>504</sup>. Techniques range from the aforementioned cheat sheets and clothes with pre-written exam answers sewn in to the most advanced modern technological methods<sup>505 506</sup>. Cell-phones are currently one of the most common methods<sup>507</sup>. Students send and receive test information via their cell-phones, assisted by their friends that are looking up information online<sup>508</sup>. Sometimes, these remote supporters operate not via cell phones or text messages, but via hidden microphones<sup>509 510 511</sup>. Such methods have increased in popularity to the point



that ready-made kits are advertised and sold in universities themselves<sup>512</sup>. This technology has become so widespread that some universities have resorted to using advanced electronic countermeasures to try and enforce honest exam taking<sup>513 514</sup>. Despite the newfound popularity of advanced technology, the old methods remain the most prevalent<sup>515</sup>. The popular culture surrounding these methods is a good indicator of the degree of academic dishonesty, and very large numbers of Russian students admit to cheating regularly. What is even more revealing is that Russian students have even come to cheat out of habit, rather than actually feeling a need to do so<sup>516</sup>. In this way, cheating is evidence of a thoroughly socialized type of corrupt behavior that students instinctively use even when not incentivized to do so. Repeated acts of bribery may have a similar effect if used for long enough. Despite such serious implications of cheating, the Russian attitude toward such behavior is unexpectedly tolerant and even nostalgic.

Russians look at cheating in a tolerant and optimistic way. The best way to capture the modern Russian attitude towards academic dishonesty and other forms is the same one expressed in American Ivy League schools at the beginning of the twentieth century - as a harmless, boyish prank or rite of passage that is expected among all students<sup>517</sup>. This lack of concern is complicated, since in the Russian language the term used for cheating does not have such a severe connotation as in English. The only equivalent term is "copying"<sup>518</sup>, which appears much less sinister to an impartial observer. Many professors, students and parents even see the act of cheating as indirectly helpful. The preparation of cheat sheets is considered to be an excellent means of cramming the night before the exam<sup>519 520 521</sup>. Regardless of the validity of such a benign perspective, most cheat sheets are no longer

prepared by students, but are ready-made for printing from websites dedicated to cheating<sup>522</sup>. Students often prepare them, conceal them in their pockets and then decide not to look at them during the exam<sup>523</sup>. In some cases, however, professors have prepared cheat sheets themselves for their students<sup>524</sup>. Other professors firmly believe in always giving their students another chance rather than giving too harsh a grade<sup>525</sup>. Despite these occasional, reassuring changes of heart, a lot of Russian cheating behavior is incredibly brazen and flagrant<sup>526</sup>, including copying directly from a hidden textbook during an exam<sup>527</sup>. In this regard, the joke about student life may be more indicative than otherwise expected. Such mass involvement in cheating behavior reveals several important aspects of Russian student behavior and socialization.

#### 10.2.2.) Causes - Incentives, Socialization and Identity

##### 10.2.2.1.) Cheating Incentives as Corruption Incentives

Students engage in the act of cheating for the some of the same reasons that they would otherwise engage in corruption. Systemic pressures and the casual acceptance of dishonest behavior both allow students to achieve success without putting in the necessary effort<sup>528</sup>. Whereas some students would bribe for a grade, this is sometimes seen as a last resort or the result of rent-seeking behavior from a professor. The much more common method of influencing one's grade dishonestly is cheating on exams, which is much better incentivized and cheaper<sup>529</sup>. Not only are there systemic pressures to force dishonestly improving one's grade, but there are also many reasons not to fear any punishment for cheating. Students have been exposed to a system where even the discovery of cheating is not seriously punished<sup>530</sup>. A common practice among universities is to force those that are caught

cheating to simply re-take the exam<sup>531</sup>. For many students, the goal here is to cheat at every opportunity, since there is no reason not to<sup>532</sup>. Furthermore, this kind of exam re-taking could be considered a form of indirect grading corruption, since most students simply need to pay a fee to re-take any exam at the rector's office in order to try and improve their grade and to be a more successful cheater. Students are often allowed to cheat by their professors, who simply take no action to police students' behavior<sup>533</sup>. This is better evidenced by the fact that cheaters are actually relatively easy to spot<sup>534</sup>, yet few students are punished for such an infraction. Such perceptions of a professor's illegitimacy can lead to increased cheating behavior among students by altering expectations<sup>535 536</sup>. These perceptions of professional role models and arbitrary or corrupt professors can lead to exacerbated academic dishonesty as well<sup>537</sup>. Such ubiquitous incentivization can allow for widespread cheating by providing constant opportunities<sup>538</sup>. If incentives are so universal and available, then it could be possible that students have been indirectly socialized to cheat, and that cheating is seen not as deviant behavior, but the norm.

#### 10.2.2.2.) Peer Socialization

A major reason that students cheat is the comprehensive socialization of this corrupt practice among their peers. Russian student peer groups and operate in a particularly insular and demanding way, which can greatly influence their members' beliefs and behavior, even causing them to actively participate in academically dishonest behavior<sup>539</sup>. Peer pressure and peer views' influence can be understood in terms of incentivization schema described in Roland Fryer's examination of "acting white" among other works in the field. Peer groups form their own value systems and project them on other group-identifying peers, with very

tangible results in terms of behavior<sup>540</sup>. Not only does this model allow for a rudimentary reconciliation of rational decision-making with student behavior, but it also allows for a much more effective model that rationalizes students' counterproductive behavior in a given environment, as supported by Akerloff and Kranton's examination of the economics of identity. When an influential peer group exerts social pressure in the form of gained or lost prestige, that behavior is often adopted by dedicated or aspiring group members. By determining their identity as one of a group member, an individual can engage in economically self-destructive behavior<sup>541</sup> as a rational act of gaining valuable prestige. Group prestige in an environment of imperfect information and non-economic, short-term, student perspective can take on a superior level of value in many situations<sup>542</sup>. This is an important consideration, since despite potentially major influences for a student engaging in corrupt behavior, peer behavior may be the most significant<sup>543</sup>. In fact, peer norms prove more influential than institutional culture, should the two ever clash<sup>544</sup>. Therefore, the degree to which Russian students engage in academically dishonest behavior is related to the degree to which peer incentivization affects them.

The Fryer, Akerloff and Kranton models of irrational peer incentivization fit Russian student behavior in explaining academic dishonesty. This rationale hinges on the role of a peer group, which is actually quite strong in Russia. Peer groups' roles in Russia are especially significant; they function as "comfortable nuclei," which insulate and support students from a harsh, cynical and condemning outside world<sup>545</sup>. Students take an active role in fostering and supporting these micro communities, which they accept non-confrontationally and as a model of unity<sup>546</sup>. This kind of voluntary social isolation extends to society in

general, where students are strongly discouraged from taking an active role<sup>547</sup>. Russian society is often considered to be an atomized social arena, where an "archipelago" of social groups makes up larger society<sup>548</sup>. Such extreme polarization would place internal prestige at a great premium over external economic recognition. This kind of behavior defies the rational human capital investment theory that has come to define large amounts of scholarship. By not acquiring necessary skills via academic dishonesty, cheaters are denying themselves the benefits of their human capital investment. Since investments in education and future earnings are valued at a much lower level than temporary peer prestige<sup>549</sup>, students are consciously engaging in personal economic sabotage that defies their long-term economic self-interest. This concept is especially revealing, considering that although 87% of Russian students cheat, only 7% think of cheating as approvable<sup>550</sup>. This shows that a great number of students are active cheaters, despite an ambivalent attitude. In fact, students around the world have been proven to be most influenced by perceived peer cheating, which is often overestimated<sup>551</sup>. In another light, the most significant way of reducing academic dishonesty is in creating peer disapproval for such actions<sup>552</sup>. The degree to which Russian peers actually engage in approval and disapproval would therefore be a leading indicator of the pervasiveness of academic dishonesty.

Cheating among Russian students is prolific and highly incentivized by peers. For many Russians, the approval of cheating is an essential, even obligatory step to fit in with their peers<sup>553</sup>. In terms of peer group assimilation, nearly 95% of Russian students see their friends as cheaters<sup>554</sup>. The act of informing on potential cheaters is incredibly damning, and any policing of students by other students is thoroughly de-incentivized<sup>555</sup>. Deviation from

expected norms of behavior can readily cause ostracism and other consequences within peer groups<sup>556</sup>. Furthermore, students are surrounded by encouragement and support from their peers. While many as 87% of students actively cheat, and only 3% condemn it<sup>557</sup>. This shows that 80% of Russian students are ambivalent cheaters, and 10% of Russians are ambivalent non-participants. This is a negative trend in the sense that student opinions about cheating are the best predictors of their eventual cheating behavior<sup>558</sup>. Even more telling is that those who condemn cheating do so primarily due to the technique's ineffectiveness<sup>559</sup>. In essence, they are surrounded by a cultural phenomenon of cheating much as they are by corruption, with a parallel incentivization scheme. In this kind of environment, many students have come to engage in cheating regularly, even habitually<sup>560</sup>. Once a student has adopted the identity of a member of a student or peer group, it is possible to resist social obligations by adopting extremely negative behaviors to avoid stress<sup>561</sup>, but this is not a reliable corrector of dishonest behavior.

Habitual cheating behavior, when surrounded by incentivization for compliance and deincentivization for deviance, very effectively demonstrates how corrupt behavior can be socialized, even when demonstrably harming the student's own future human capital development. This is underscored by how once an identity is adopted, it becomes permanently internalized and a source of anxiety if broken<sup>562</sup>. It is important to note that an individual does have the ability to choose which identity to adopt, within certain limitations; the choice of an institution of higher education can serve as an example of such a decision, due to its socializing effects on students<sup>563</sup>. There is no guarantee, however, that this choice

is made either rationally or with sufficient information. The role of non-peer policing, however, requires special consideration.

#### 10.2.2.3) Policing Cheating and Corruption

Cheating behavior, and thereby corrupt behavior, can be effectively policed. When those in positions of authority sincerely monitor and regulate the behavior of students during exams, cheating can be substantially reduced. In one famous instance, at a prestigious Russian university, a cheating experiment was undertaken where exams were administered in two ways, labeled "European" and "Russian"<sup>564</sup>. "Russian"-style examinations were carried out in the traditional way, with the students' teachers during the semester administering their final exams and under typical university cheating monitoring and punishment policies. The "European" method, however, used exam monitors who had no prior contact with the students, and who explained the new policy regarding cheating and punishment very clearly. The Russian-style produced no observable changes in student behavior, but the European style led to a stunning drop in observed cheating behavior among students within a semester<sup>565</sup>. This means that Russian students either devised new and undetectable cheating methods, that they somehow compromised the monitor, or that they overcame years of socialization and incentivization to take an exam honestly.

This kind of behavioral change demonstrates that under a proper policing policy, highly socialized corrupt behavior can be reduced or even removed. The combination of effective communication of expectations, monitoring, and actual punishment led to a sudden change of incentivization structures. In this environment, at least for graduate students, it can be safely concluded that Russian students were acting in a way to better ensure their academic

success. This effect is demonstrated in the way that students engage in academic dishonesty only insofar as such behavior is incentivized<sup>566</sup>. This is not to say that attempts at covering up other students' successful dishonest activity ceased, but it does speak to the overall effectiveness of changing a key part of the cheating incentive. Such results are an excellent representation of the traditional and rational view of cheating's "criminal theory," which emphasizes the primacy of perceived opportunity in academically dishonest acts<sup>567</sup>. If this opportunity can be removed via policing, then perhaps academic dishonesty and corruption are not a function of identity or socialized behavior but of simple institutional failure in providing excessive opportunities to transgress, which later serve as an environment that affects an individual's identity. Therefore, if this example is to be considered representative of overall student behavior, then either corrupt behavior is not irreversibly socialized, or students respond more to real incentivization than to their own socialized behavior in terms of cheating. Thus, cheating and corrupt behavior can be regulated in the traditional economic sense - by transforming packages of incentives.

### **10.3.) Implications**

The implications of widespread and successful academic dishonesty are the same as those presented by all of the other types of academic corruption that students directly participate in, representing especially damaging implications for engendering future corrupt behavior. Essentially, cheating on exams is a form of grading corruption or accreditation corruption that does not include a complicit authority figure or bribery. This kind of corruption poses exactly the same implications for human capital development in terms of a denial of training and the false signaling of graduates' abilities. Furthermore, successfully



cheating on accreditation examinations can lead to exactly the same problems of incompetence in valuable sectors of society posed by corruption. The loss of credibility that is suffered from producing unqualified specialists damages existing levels of trust in accreditation organizations. This may also lead to a collapse in trust, even though the source of this activity is regular citizens, not necessarily institutions that unintentionally issue accreditation to undeserving professionals. Authorities remain sincere, but powerless, which can seriously undermine confidence in institutions' fundamental effectiveness. This kind of distinction is essential in understanding another dimension of the socialization of corruption among academically dishonest students.

Academic dishonesty is a perfect incubator for future corrupt activity due to the role that is played by the student. Students, who are essentially independent actors in terms of choosing to engage in academic dishonesty, take it upon themselves to break essential rules of conduct in order to enjoy the resulting benefits. This particular environment puts the student in the place of the corrupt authority, who is accountable to a policing agent, the professor. In this particular activity, the student isn't merely exposed to a world of institutionalized corruption, but she becomes the source of corruption and can later draw conclusions about the value of continuing such a practice later in life. Furthermore, academic dishonesty often occurs in groups, which resemble the mutually protecting corrupt-acting *krugi* found in public life<sup>568</sup>. In fact, cheating is a way to teach students "the ABCs" of corrupt economic activity<sup>569</sup>. This kind of situation creates an excellent microcosm for generating and observing the corrupt behavior that is found throughout Russia.

## **11.) DIPLOMA MILLS**

One kind of higher educational institution that encompasses all aspects of educational corruption is the diploma mill. A diploma mill is an institution that exists for the sole purpose of satisfying demand for corrupt academic services, examples of which have existed in the West since the 18th century<sup>570</sup>. In the Russian Federation, false degrees are common, and are considered a serious problem by the national education ministry. Estimates claim that as many as 200,000 people have gotten jobs due to fake diplomas<sup>571</sup>. The presence of such diploma mills serves as both evidence of the extent of higher educational corruption and its socialization. If there were not widespread acceptance of educational corruption on the part of students, the demand for such services would be very low. In fact, a cursory examination of Russian press reveals dozens of advertisements for fake degrees from "any university"<sup>572</sup>. In a more cynical sense, there is an impression that the cheapest universities are simply glorified diploma mills that insist on the ritual of attending classes rather than selling a fake diploma directly<sup>573</sup>. Unfortunately, methods to reduce the number of diploma mills and fake degrees have been so far unsuccessful<sup>574</sup>. Diploma mills also carry all of the implications of selection corruption and grading corruption, but to an even greater degree. Since the institution is fundamentally corrupt, by even taking part in it, a student demonstrates acceptance of corrupt practices. Furthermore, the extent to which these kinds of degrees are valuable demonstrates that corrupt behavior is rewarded in certain contexts, and is considered a means of social advancement.

Diploma mills are very well represented in doctoral education. In the Russian Federation, there has been a major jump in doctoral dissertations, which has been mostly due

to the increase in dissertations for sale<sup>575</sup>. For example, as many as 20-30% of all defended dissertations are estimated to be written on demand by a professional dissertation specialist<sup>576</sup>. Unfortunately, there is a widespread perception of doctoral and dissertation corruption in Russia<sup>577</sup>. Despite the increase in false dissertations, Ph.D holders seem to be indifferent to this trend<sup>578</sup>. The dissertation market has prices that range from \$300 to \$50,000, depending on the prestige and professional value<sup>579</sup>. This kind of pricing may be justified to corrupt consumers, because outside of academia, both real and fake Ph.Ds are often assumed to be real<sup>580</sup>. Whereas other types of higher education corruption cause future corrupt behavior in students and graduates, diploma mills are indicators of the existing level of corruption among students who seek their services. Other corruption forms can present especially damaging consequences by increasing the overall level of corrupt actors in society. This socialization effect, however, is subject to important mitigating factors.

## **12.) SOCIALIZATION MITIGATION**

### **12.1.) Historical legacy**

The historical legacy of corruption in Russia could produce and perpetuate modern levels of corruption independent of the status of higher education institutions. As noted before, the levels of corruption in the Soviet Union were so universal that Russian society has continued to suffer from their effects to the current day. In terms of perceptions of corruption, societal cynicism towards the government persists, independent of other reforms. Furthermore, massive systemic shocks created such a high level of openly corrupt activity that such behavior became a fact of life for many. Therefore, a question is raised about to what degree contemporary corruption in higher education could be considered decisive in determining overall levels of Russian corruption. This objection can be partially answered by looking at the recent history of the Russian Federation. Communist legacies persist, but individual behavior was profoundly shaped by the chaotic 1990s as well. The changes in the educational sector alone demonstrate the degree to which historical expectations and trends may no longer be applicable in modern Russia. After twenty years of non-communist government and a fundamentally different institutional environment, it would be overly simplistic to assume that cultural legacies are the primary determinants of corrupt behavior. The effects of a functioning higher education system's role in combating and influencing corruption may be significant to an even greater degree than Russia's particularly corrupt history.

Higher education plays a unique role in policing corruption in any social environment. This is reflected in how high-quality education and social renewal are considered effective

ways to reduce corruption in certain cases<sup>581</sup>. Increased human capital and higher per capita income also serve to reduce corruption<sup>582</sup>. Therefore, a compromised higher education system may still be serving the role as corruptor of future generations, but not directly. It could be via the denial of a very valuable source of corruption reduction that higher education corruption creates harmful environment for human capital realization. Therefore, the value of higher education as an institution must be included in a serious examination of societal corruption. Higher education is related to another important vector for reducing corruption that is not related to socialization alone.

### **12.2.) Labor Market and Inequality**

Corruption can also be caused by inequality, which is independent of socialization. This social condition undermines mutual trust<sup>583</sup> and exacerbates scarcity, which lead to increased corruption. The primary means of overcoming such inequality is increased economic affluence, which grants an educated individual greater influence. This is achieved via enhancing one's earnings as the result of higher education boosting the labor market value and earning potential of a non-empowered individual<sup>584</sup>. However, with a corrupt system of higher education, academic achievement does not resolve issues of poverty nor does it consistently raise income<sup>585</sup>. Levels of higher academic achievement do not directly lead to increased levels of earnings, and as many as 43% of Russian graduates actively strive to get a second college degree in order to make up for a bad choice of a major as an undergraduate<sup>586</sup>. This trend explains the unusual statistic that twice as many students are admitted to Russian higher education institutions than graduated from high schools in 2007<sup>587</sup>.

Unfortunately, the labor market in Russia is "completely deformed"<sup>588</sup>. The nature of the Russian labor market defies traditional measurement attempts, since as much as 50% of Russian temporary work is based on informal agreements, and 10-12% of Russians work on the basis of a verbal agreement<sup>589</sup>. Moreover, even if one is presented with an increased income, one may very realistically choose to become corrupt due to corrupt opportunities and socialized corrupt behavior<sup>590</sup>. This deformation is especially severe, since not even the chronic labor shortage<sup>591 592</sup> can compel employers to change their hiring and compensation policies. In the Russian Federation about 70% of graduates expect to get work via mutual contacts, not via open labor market competition, thereby obviating the objective signaling role of their institutions. In fact, the number of students who expect to find a job on their professional merits alone is only about 16%<sup>593</sup>. In this environment, even if a student had an honestly earned university degree, then it is entirely likely that a personal contact would determine their career path, not signaled merit. Due to this ineffective labor market, educational benefits may not be possible for reducing corruption.

Distorted labor market conditions squander human capital and can cause societal corruption independently of higher education. Unfortunately, many crucial positions in the Russian Federation are terribly underpaid – doctors, professors, policemen, soldiers and bureaucrats. The human capital investments made in these sectors are wasted, due to human capital losing its value without the presence of a sufficient mechanism to realize its potential<sup>594</sup>. In state-dominated sectors, the labor market doesn't truly exist, since government near-monopsony artificially determines labor market conditions. Low levels of pay, poor working conditions and entrenched corruption can produce corrupt behavior in all

of these economic areas. The transmission of workplace skills does not occur in a vacuum, often accompanied by essential organizational values as well. It is also possible that co-workers, assuming the roles of one's peers, could influence professionals to behave in dishonest ways, even if they emerged from higher education without any internalization of corrupt behavior. There have been opportunities to become private doctors or teach at private universities for nearly twenty years, but despite this phenomenon, the healthcare and educational sectors remain the most corrupt in Russia as of June 2009<sup>595</sup>. Even though more research must be done to address these caveats, there are reasons to put them in context of higher education corruption as a competing influence.

Labor market distortion may be a trailing indicator of the results of corrupt higher education. The implications of higher education corruption very closely parallel the dilemmas facing the current workforce and Russian society in general. Labor market distortions due to government influence may be caused by simple state inadequacies, but widespread corrupt behavior is a major implication of grading, selection and accreditation corruption, as well as academic dishonesty. Furthermore, in an absence of hard data, it could be just as easily contended that higher education is the cause of mass elite corruption than the result. The essential question is precisely where workers and professionals acquire their corrupt habits, which creates even more questions in an overall examination of this problem.

### **12.3.) Alternative Influences**

#### **12.3.1.) Secondary Education**

The widespread ability of students to effectively adapt to a corrupt higher educational environment implies that they may already be veterans of such behavior before entering a

university. Corruption in Russian education isn't isolated to higher education. Primary and secondary education also have high levels of corruption in terms of arbitrary behavior<sup>596</sup> academic dishonesty, and selection corruption<sup>597</sup>. In terms of previously addressed topics of corruption, the current higher education student body is already well-versed. From 2001-2005, the levels of student participation in secondary education corruption increased from 13.2% to 41%<sup>598</sup>. Poor EGE results demonstrate the degree to which high school exam bribery and grading corruption have permeated the system<sup>599</sup>. Certain corruption mechanisms are in wide use in high schools as well, such as the ubiquitous tutor acting as a corrupt services broker<sup>600</sup>.

As for abusive behavior and professional misconduct, there are widespread reports of physical and emotional trauma inflicted on students by their teachers; this kind of treatment has become internalized and normalized by students<sup>601</sup>. Unfortunately, this abuse can cause serious physical and emotional harm<sup>602</sup>, which leads to widespread feelings of resentment towards authority in general<sup>603</sup>. This effect is complicated by the powerful and durable role of an ascriptive identity provided from an authority figure<sup>604</sup>. If a student is repeatedly labeled an idiot or deviant, she may come to behave as one. In these institutions, it is entirely possible that corruption is socialized before a student enters a university, since teachers often serve as role models of acceptable adult behavior for students<sup>605</sup>. In terms of soft skills, there is an increased effectiveness of soft skill formation in earlier years rather than later in education<sup>606</sup>. As for the initial choice of engaging in corruption before entering a university - bribery for admissions - many students have internalized this behavior even before their



contact with the higher education institution itself<sup>607</sup>. Therefore, corrupt universities could merely "finish schools" of corruption, rather than the primary influence on future behavior.

### 12.3.2.) Family

A student's family is a major behavior-shaping influence, which acts as a source of socialization independent of higher education. With regards to abusive behavior, parents are often active supporters of such practices, feeling that it serves as a way to better raise their children<sup>608</sup>. This kind of behavior is reinforced by the Soviet model of professors routinely criticizing and humiliating their students in class, invoking such terms as "idiot, wretch and cretin" with reckless abandon<sup>609</sup>. As mentioned in previous profile of Russian students, parents play a key role in the choice of a student's institution and major. With regards to academic dishonesty, parents have been known to help their children in cheating on exams<sup>610</sup>. In terms of actually realizing corrupt transactions, parents often provide the necessary finance and influence. Some parents bribe their child's way through elementary school and high school, which causes unruly behavior and a passive acceptance of the value in corrupt activity<sup>611</sup>. The use of corrupt influence is at such a level that most affluent and influential families engage in such activity regardless of their children's ability, preferring to guarantee their access to higher education in the most secure way possible<sup>612</sup>. Additionally, when universities do not provide complete or acceptable socialization models, the family usually compensates for it<sup>613</sup>. If, for example, parents who refused to engage in corrupt activity could provide an effective model of ethical behavior. Finally, students often remain at home during their time in a university and beyond, which constantly puts them into contact with their

parents. Depending on the nature of their interaction, a parent could influence equal to other competing social influences.

### 12.3.3.) Social Corruption Immersion

Overall Russian societal corruption and perceptions of corruption could be another source of socialization. Unfortunately, corruption has absolutely saturated all public and private aspects of Russian society<sup>614</sup>. Experience with the corrupt health care system, the corrupt police force or other individual examples could have a strong formative effect on Russia's youth. Higher education corruption, after all, is estimated to be only 10-20% of all corrupt transactions in Russia<sup>615</sup>, which provides for many opportunities to come into contact with corruption in other spheres of society. According to some experts, Russia is perceived to have "a culture of piracy and forgery"<sup>616</sup>. In terms of professional corruption, it is perceived that almost every Russian is a participant<sup>617</sup>. Many Russian institutions are seen as corrupt by default, and higher education is no exception<sup>618 619</sup>. In fact, according to Temple and Petrov's work, higher education corruption is perceived as only a part of a much broader system of societal corruption<sup>620</sup>. In this kind of institutional environment, it seems that higher education may not be a leading producer of corrupt behavior, but a leading indicator of an overall level of societal corruption. In a remarkable example, only 40% of Russians have declared that they are completely unwilling to bribe in order to enter a university, leaving 60% that are either ready to do it or would consider such an opportunity<sup>621</sup>. Therefore it seems entirely possible that Russian students could be entering their universities already corrupted by the society around them.

### 12.3.4.) Higher Education as a Unique Influence

Higher education is uniquely significant in socializing corruption among Russian students, which is potentially greater than other alternative influences. Whereas preschool, elementary school and secondary education can instill harmful soft skills, corrupt behavior is not necessarily determined in these institutions more than in any other. Socialization implications are more significant for higher education, since it specifically affects a nation's talented youth, including their value formation and their future behavior in positions of authority<sup>622</sup>. This is an essential consideration, since corrupt universities indirectly teach and reward graduates who engaged in corruption<sup>623</sup>. This observation is especially important to consider, since many students in secondary education firmly believe in the "fairness of the educational system, despite reports of dishonesty or corruption"<sup>624</sup>. To directly subject such students to corruption could fundamentally alter their perceptions and expectations.

In another regard, higher education is a formative phase for Russian students due to their relative financial independence and decision-making ability. Whereas parents have a major role in facilitating corrupt activity, the way that students chose to engage in corrupt activity on their own via grading corruption, their own wages and acting as the primary decision-maker in engaging in corrupt activity is unique. Before entering a university, a student's parents were approached by teachers and admissions committees, or they were the primary actors in a corrupt outside world. In terms of grading corruption and accreditation corruption after students begin their degree program, they become the target for supply side corruption and the initiators of demand side corruption. Reductions in corruption were not accomplished by keeping an entire generation insulated from dishonest activity, therefore at some point an individual must make a choice to engage in or reject corruption as a standard of

personal behavior. Until a student becomes an independent, corrupt actor, their future corrupt activity is still in question - and a university is where this transformation can take place.

#### **12.4.) Corruption Mitigation**

##### **12.4.1.) Inaccurate Measurement**

A potential fundamental flaw in this examination and in all other examinations of corruption is the imprecise measurement of corruption. Corruption's hidden nature greatly complicates any accurate measurement or comparison, due to a lack of simple verification<sup>625</sup><sup>626</sup>. This complicated environment forces any analyst to rely on incomplete and anecdotal evidence, which can misrepresent the problem as a whole<sup>627</sup> <sup>628</sup>. There are some methods to reliably collect corruption information<sup>629</sup>, but only in a limited sense. As shown earlier, perceptions of corruption can be deliberately manipulated in order to serve a particular goal, be it political or personal. In another sense, even sincere witness accounts may mistakenly identify a given act as corruption. A survey done in Sub-Saharan Africa demonstrates this phenomenon, where an observing population correctly identified a government as corrupt, but could neither successfully identify the degree of corruption nor its mechanism<sup>630</sup>. In this same survey, biases can severely inflate or reduce the amount of perceived corruption, most often causing inflation of the perceived quantity of corrupt actions<sup>631</sup>. This feature, compounded with the inability of observers to distinguish corrupt activity from simple incompetence<sup>632</sup> would undermine many efforts to accurately identify corruption on a large scale. In this sense, it would be understandable why some experts would consider the extent of Russian higher educational corruption to be "drastically exaggerated"<sup>633</sup>.

Alternative explanations, however, do not eliminate the idea of corruption, since "corruption thrives on disorganization," which can act as a shield for corrupt acts<sup>634</sup>. It is theoretically possible to measure corruption by using some broad aggregation techniques,<sup>635</sup> but these also rely on perceptions, which are often undermined by endemic biases<sup>637</sup>. Despite difficulties in measurement, corruption perceptions are still used to determine official anti-corruption policies<sup>638</sup>. Even considering these complications, the amount of anecdotal evidence, official statistics and third party evaluations of corruption throughout scholarship about Russian higher education is significant unto itself. Given the massive amount of visible corruption and corroborating accounts of such activity, it is safe to conclude that corruption for Russian higher education is a particularly is a serious problem that requires consideration.

#### 12.4.2.) Self-Limiting Corruption

One major argument against the impact of corruption is that the phenomenon is self-limiting. In the case of bribery, increased competition and corrupt access can drive up the average price of bribes, which ultimately harms corrupt providers, since they have priced many of their potential customers out of the market. This consideration explains why many bribe-givers try to hide the amount that they pay<sup>639</sup> aside from the criminal element of the question. This argument, however, is self-defeating. Since corruption is fundamentally hidden, a lack of information prevents reliable market mechanisms from functioning. In fact, it is up to the providers to set prices, which must be kept hidden from other participants, which can allow for very flexible and unequal pricing. Another version of this self-limiting argument is the devaluation of the corrupt good. Unlike medical care or police protection, once a university's reputation sinks sufficiently then its degrees should also lose their value<sup>640</sup>.

In this sense, doctoral programs and dissertations are valued in a similar way, dependent on their level of corruption<sup>641</sup>. Counter to predicted market behavior, this trend has not yet been observed. In fact, despite the worsening picture of educational corruption in general and higher education in particular, demand for higher education has consistently increased to the present day. In the Russian case, corruption is not self-limiting.

#### 12.4.3.) Grease the Wheels

The traditional caveats of corruption's benefits do not apply to Russian higher education. Throughout corruption literature, there is a persistent argument that corruption may actually facilitate the functioning of a dysfunctional society by overcoming otherwise insurmountable obstacles<sup>642 643</sup>. This allows a system to achieve a minimal "degree of functionality"<sup>644</sup>. In Russia, the standard incarnation of this practice is the use of blat to overcome institutional weakness in production capacity<sup>645</sup>. The means of exchange is not something as objective and universal as currency, but a one-time favor that could be repaid at a later date. This approach sees corruption as a series of one-time occurrences that increase the transaction costs in an economy, but such transaction costs are actually far more damaging than other transaction costs, such as taxes<sup>646</sup>. This damage can be realized due to the illegal nature of a corrupt transaction, its undermining of institutions and other social harms<sup>647</sup>. Additionally, corruption can substantially reduce investment and economic growth while overcoming restrictive bureaucracy<sup>648</sup>. Specifically in terms of higher education, the facilitation caveat cannot be accepted<sup>649</sup>. In fact, most of the gains that could be expected from corruption are short-term only, with more serious long-term systemic implications<sup>650</sup>.

#### 12.4.4.) Test Case Objection

Despite the dire predictions of higher education corruption, many expected implications have not been realized. If the implications presented in this paper are truly as threatening as they are presented to be, then they should have been realized already. As the Russian economy continues to grow, higher education enrollment continues to increase, and diplomas rise in value. It would appear that some of these implications could be overstated in this context. Furthermore, since corruption in the 1990s and the Soviet Union were so common, and the flaws of signaling, a flawed labor market and effective training were present, the current situation cannot be considered unique. In answer to this objection, what might be observed today is, in fact the result of this corrupt trend. Modern higher education corruption and widespread societal corruption may very well serve as a test case for the effects of a corrupt university system. In fact, overall corruption in education, healthcare and in the private sector has grown as predicted. In another sense, the corruption of the Soviet system, often the source of modern educational elites, may very well have produced those who oversee the massive levels of corruption today. There is not enough direct evidence to draw a basic causative relationship between Soviet higher educational corruption and the structural corruption that permeates Russian society. However, it would be reasonable to conclude that a corrupt higher educational system would greatly contribute to the perpetuation of such a trend. In terms of the implications, it would be unproductive to connect Russian development levels with a functional higher education system. Since much recent Russian economic growth was due to favorable market prices for raw materials exports<sup>651</sup>, then economic growth could have been achieved without effective higher education or human capital growth. Thus, if such a situation has occurred, the implications of higher education

corruption on the Russian economy and corrupt socialization may have been partially delayed instead of disproven altogether.



### **13.) IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

#### **13.1.) Political Implications**

The current level of corruption in Russia represents a serious loss of state strength. The ability of corruption to usurp state policies and regulations directly and seriously weakens the ability of a government to govern<sup>652</sup>. In this situation, although the state may retain its dominant position in the market and public life, inefficiencies and unmanageable corrupt actors prevent effective state functioning<sup>653</sup>. Corruption is an explicit surrendering of social priorities to those of the bureaucrat, which leads to poor implementation of even the most beneficial programs<sup>654</sup>. For a nation like the Russian Federation, these questions are especially significant, since the state is a major presence in most sectors of the economy and a major provider of most essential services. Public safety, healthcare, education and infrastructure all will suffer if the state cannot act effectively. In this sense, endemic Russian corruption is a real and damaging loss of state effectiveness and potential societal good. Services aside, the fundamental stability of a regime is brought into question by corruption, which can cause complete state capture<sup>655</sup> or even a governmental collapse.

An excellent case study for the damaging role of corruption in the Russian Federation is the collapse of the Soviet Union. Towards the end of the Soviet era, the ultimately fatal question of national independence was first raised by Andropov's anti-corruption drives, which were continued by Gorbachev<sup>656</sup>. At this point, the entire Soviet elite had been completely compromised by corrupt self-interest, and it was widely known to "every Soviet citizen" that every member of the party's leadership could be subject to a sincere and damaging corruption investigation<sup>657</sup>. This effort was greatly slowed by the previously-

mentioned overlapping krugi of corrupt mutual protection. The ultimate lack of success demonstrated the degree to which the country's mutually supporting corrupt activity was effective, and the fear which such efforts created demonstrated how universal such corruption was. Despite ongoing anti-corruption efforts, universal corruption towards the end of the Soviet Union eventually led to the regime's collapse for many reasons<sup>658</sup>. This effect of corruption in determining the fate of the Soviet Union demonstrates that the more corrupt Russian society has become, the riskier it becomes to attempt to reduce corruption. Therefore, incremental increases in societal corruption, especially as mutually reinforcing elite krugi, should be considered as reinforcing the implications of corruption as well as the durability of corruption in general. In fact, corruption is not only durable in this sense, but its very perception is a fundamentally self-perpetuating and self-renewing phenomenon.

### **13.2.) Perceptions**

#### **13.2.1.) Perceived Corruption versus Real Corruption**

Perceptions of corruption directly lead to further corrupt behavior. A common refrain in the world of dubious business is "if I didn't do this job, then they would just find somebody else, so why not me?" Such a perception of widespread and harmful business practices serves to reinforce such behavior among individual actors. Existing corruption incentivizes corrupt behavior in a similar way, since perceptions of corruption cause further corrupt behavior<sup>659</sup>. This is seen in the labor market and business via individuals engaging in corrupt behavior so as to not be at a competitive disadvantage against other corrupt actors<sup>660 661</sup>. In terms of higher education in particular, perceptions of corruption can directly lead to corrupt behavior<sup>662 663</sup>. These perceptions, even if they are actually false, can still cause the same

effects<sup>664</sup>, and irresponsible media coverage or sensationalizing scandals can create perceptions that lead to more corruption<sup>665</sup>. The perception of corruption, even a false one, can engender a fundamentally harmful perspective among citizens.

Despite their effectiveness in causing corrupt behavior, perceptions can often be wrong. Corruption is a very visible phenomenon, but stubbornly unquantifiable<sup>666</sup>. The hidden nature of corruption makes true observation difficult<sup>667 668</sup>, and unreliable anecdotal evidence is used by researchers and individual observers<sup>669</sup>. In fact, many observations of corruption are fundamentally biased as the result of many potential factors<sup>670</sup>, which artificially increases perceived corruption<sup>671</sup>. This condition allows for the manipulation of perceptions of corruption in many instances. While corrupt actors are interested in reducing their own corrupt appearance, they are interested in making their competitors and political opponents appear corrupt. In order to evaluate the extent of this problem, however, one issue remains constant – corruption is very visible, but almost entirely unquantifiable<sup>672 673</sup>. This measurement flaw does not limit the effects of corruption since its perceptions can be just as damaging<sup>674</sup>. This is an especially important point, since many observers incorrectly determine the corruption of an individual act<sup>675</sup>. Trends such as bad organization, poor policing or simple incompetence can appear to be corruption in a non-transparent system<sup>676</sup>. Despite this flaw in perception, the increase in actual corrupt activity increases the likelihood that actual, damaging corrupt behavior is encountered. In more than one analysis, perceptions have been empirically shown to increase occurrences of corrupt behavior by reducing interpersonal trust<sup>677</sup>. At its core, faith in institutions is predicated on the trust of an

anonymous state actor to serve the interests of the public. If trust in institutions is completely lost, even greater implications can be realized.

### 13.2.2.) Trust Collapse

Widespread incompetence and corruption can lead to a profoundly damaging loss of trust, called a "trust collapse." A trust collapse is a situation where certain essential foundations of society cease to work, since large segments of the public refuse to cooperate with it. This is seen when people gradually come to avoid the state as much as possible, seeing it as fundamentally corrupt<sup>678</sup>. An example would be if citizens stopped obeying traffic laws, since traffic police are perceived as being universally corrupt<sup>679</sup>. This trust collapse has been realized to an extreme, where many crimes are not reported to the police at all by citizens who fear becoming the victims of corrupt authorities<sup>680</sup>. Another example would be if fire codes were routinely ignored, since fire inspectors will not honestly evaluate a building under any circumstances. In each of these situations, unacceptable physical damage can be done to a population via malfunctioning institutions and the deprivation of essential services.

The fundamental value of universities, accreditation and other similar institutions is that their evaluative authority grants a guarantee of minimal individual competence. Once that guarantee breaks down, especially amidst widespread corruption, entire sectors of a society can cease to function due to lack of use or over-abuse. In terms of courts and government regulation, trust collapse effects can be observed in the Russian business environment, where entrepreneurs have come to fear bureaucrats more than criminals, and chronically suffer from broken contracts<sup>681</sup>. This kind of standard has led business to be

conducted in an entirely improvised and informal way, placing trust above all else so that reliance on unreliable institutions will not become necessary<sup>682</sup>. This kind of adaptation can compensate for institutional weakness in education as well, evidenced by the current labor market and institutional practice of only hiring via mutual acquaintances. This caveat cannot mitigate overall trust collapse implications, since institutional weakness is at best offset, but not cured by networks<sup>683</sup>. This logic is simple, since establishing trust requires significant time investments and contains inherent risk, which increases transaction costs above those found in a properly functioning environment of reliable, anonymous actors. Considering the probability of such implications, it is important to gauge their particular severity for higher education.

A trust collapse in higher education would produce severe consequences by completely undermining certain key functions. Should this trust collapse be fully realized in higher education, then the implications for training would be partially affected, but signaling would fail altogether<sup>684</sup>. One early indicator of a possible trust collapse in higher education is seen in the trend of some students to not even bother applying to a university, since they see themselves as lacking the necessary clout to influence corrupt admissions committees<sup>685</sup>. More than one third of current students see the removal of corruption from the higher education system as fundamentally impossible<sup>686</sup>. In this sense, huge losses in human capital would be realized via the waste and misallocation of resources, since many capable candidates are self-selecting to forego higher education completely or to resolve themselves to the inevitability of corruption. The implications of a trust collapse can be best understood when approaching them with an historical perspective.

The Soviet Union experienced more than one trust collapse, which caused irreparable harm to the country as a whole. A major source of trust collapse was in the consumer economy, which could not produce sufficient goods to support the Soviet population<sup>687</sup>. This fits the trust collapse model since, by serving as a branch of the government, consumer production was a state institution. The rise of the black market and massive informal economies of exchange and barter came to make up for this weakness. A complete lack of trust was afforded to the security services in many situations, including the police. Another form of trust collapse was the loss of political legitimacy of the Bolshevik party. Glasnost in the form of reduced news controls and opening secret chapters of Soviet history fatally undermined trust in the regime, which led to massive unrest and calls for elections<sup>688</sup>. This fatally damaged the ability of the Union to maintain its integrity, while being unable to save itself by applying classic repressive measures. This collapse in the state apparatus ended its ability to provide services in any meaningful way, which led to many of the current systemic pressures that are blamed for current corruption. Even though corruption did exist in the Soviet university system, modern Russian higher education is at a greater risk for a trust collapse.

The Russian Federation's higher education system is more likely to generate a trust collapse than before due to the internalization of corrupt behavior and its observable consequences. Selection corruption did exist in the Soviet Union, but universal corruption was not perceived as it is today<sup>689</sup>. In today's Russia, many students claim to have entered universities honestly, but many still maintain perceptions of widespread dishonest behavior<sup>690</sup>. This widespread perception of educational corruption can lead to very serious

systematic problems for Russian education in particular and society as a whole<sup>691 692</sup>. One example can be found at Nizhny Novgorod State University, where a popular student perception of the administration is that "all our school managers care for is their own enrichment"<sup>693</sup>.

In terms of student participation in corrupt behavior, bribery's stigma has long ago been mollified by the common euphemism "informal fees"<sup>694</sup>. This commercial socialization can also be seen in how some students have internalized and normalized the purchasing of exam grades - seeing it as a routine practice<sup>695</sup>. Some groups of students engage in organized bribery so as to get a better price; recently a whole class collected 150,000 RUR to purchase grades collectively so as to maximize the value for their bribe<sup>696</sup>. Finally, in a particularly sobering light for policymakers, recent empirical surveys have demonstrated that many students and their families do not see any connection between their individual efforts and the quality of their education. In an even more telling survey, only 33% of Russians believe that their admission to a university depends on their academic ability<sup>697</sup>. This trend raises the unpleasant possibility that Russian education may devolve into nothing more than a "symbolic institution"<sup>698</sup>, which cannot meet the training and human capital needs of the country. This kind of collapse can lead to significant long-term damage to any institution.

A trust collapse fundamentally undermines an institution's functioning in several key ways. First of all, the services are denied to a population, which ultimately comes to stop using it altogether. This kind of atrophy is compounded by the fact that recruiting efforts and institutional renewal efforts are comprehensively frustrated. An artificial restriction on future cadre renewal is created, since those seeking employment in this sector will be likely to look

to corrupt benefits first, rather than last. Attracting complicit talent and a hierarchical reinforcement mechanism of centralized corruption would create a self-renewing corruption mechanism. In this context, only an external source of anti-corruption enforcement would have a hope of restoring such a thoroughly compromised institution. Furthermore, the sector that this institution occupies cannot grow naturally or healthily. In another sense, when a state or its institutions are seen as petty or predatory, corruption becomes an accepted fact of life<sup>699</sup>. To an even greater degree, corruption itself could be interpreted as an absence of functional institutions<sup>700</sup>. In this regard, the more widespread a trust collapse becomes, the more corrupt a society becomes, which then function as mutually reinforcing phenomena. This effect is multiplied by the fundamental role of education in the reproduction of Russian society<sup>701</sup>. Such a significant level of societal corruption would produce its own consequences for the Russian Federation.

### **13.3.) Economic Implications**

#### **13.3.1.) Macroeconomic Implications**

Corruption is substantially damaging to a nation's economy. Corruption could seriously harm a nation's economic growth, overall income levels and investment<sup>702</sup>. Additional harm can be realized via increased inefficiencies and reduced economic growth because of misappropriation of public funds<sup>703</sup>. A primary way that corruption can harm economic growth in Russia is through market distortion. Corruption is a major impediment to business and the overall effectiveness of the private sector<sup>704 705</sup>. Private firms can seek competitive advantage over each other through government policies that arbitrarily benefit them and harm their competitors. Despite the popularity of such practices, engaging in



corrupt activity often harms firm growth<sup>706</sup>. This kind of activity is aided by a chronically weak Russian institutional environment, which would otherwise be key in fostering business development<sup>707</sup>. This kind of policy prevents consumers from benefiting from a competitive market, which can allow monopolies to form to the expense of the population<sup>708</sup>. Corrupt behavior can greatly dissuade market entry from new firms and restrict new firm growth<sup>709</sup>, which has caused even more market damage in the modern Russian Federation<sup>710</sup>.

Another factor that is relevant in this respect is that firms cannot be held accountable by the market, which de-incentivizes any kind of innovation in order to earn and protect one's revenue<sup>711</sup>. When a firm's market position isn't achieved, but merely rented from decisive regulators, there is no reason to seek any reform from primary stakeholders. Since market entry is profoundly difficult in the current Russian economy and established interests are decisive<sup>712</sup> these stakeholders show no likelihood of changing soon. Therefore, private enterprise can also become a predatory presence in Russia's corrupt society by both corruptly profiting at the expense of other interests and perpetuating a corrupt environment by this very practice. Since this kind of corruption is the result of regulatory and institutional failure, it serves as a self-perpetuating phenomenon that costs an economy a great deal in terms of squandered efficiencies<sup>713 714</sup>. From the individual firm perspective, damages from corruption are highly visible, but these consequences require more detailed investigation in terms of market-wide human capital.

### 13.3.2.) Reducing Human Capital

#### 13.3.2.1.) Infrastructure and Labor Market

Corruption in society can affect existing human capital and its subsequent production<sup>715</sup>. This harm can be realized in several ways. Human capital requires important systemic support, which Russia unfortunately lacks<sup>716</sup>. Insufficient systemic support can prevent human capital accumulation, due not to a lack of incentives but a lack of opportunities for actors to improve their own human capital<sup>717</sup>. The lack of a competitive business environment and the inability of small firms to diversify the private sector restrict both overall economic growth and human capital realization<sup>718</sup>. As described above, the Russian labor market is far from an ideal means of realizing national human capital, which could frustrate even the most productive higher education systems. An uncompetitive labor market prevents the effective realization of human capital potential, since the most appropriate candidates cannot find optimal placement. Abusive policies, poor wages and other harmful elements can make for very attractive relative terms for working in other countries. An unsuitable national labor market is no longer a barrier for the realization of human capital on an individual level, given the modern international labor market, which unto itself causes another problem for national human capital accumulation.

#### 13.3.2.2.) Brain Drain

Brain drain is often the direct result of corruption or systemic pressures that result from corruption, representing serious economic implications. As of 2006, polls showed that as much as 70% of Russia's youth was ready to emigrate<sup>719</sup>. The first waves of brain drain in the 1990s were the result of economic hardship. A major impetus for researchers and academics to leave in this period was the removal of major sources of state funding<sup>720</sup>. In terms of higher education, it is estimated that nearly 70,000 academics went abroad<sup>721</sup>. In

another regard, it is estimated that more than 200,000 scientists and specialists left Russia during the early post-Soviet period<sup>722</sup>. The degree of economic damage to the Russian Federation as a result of this effect can be estimated in terms of unrealized economic potential of émigrés. The size of such damage is considerable - equal to the entire annual budget of the Russian Federation<sup>723</sup>. Some authors point to notable Russian inventors throughout history who realized their talents in the United States, producing such innovations the television and helicopter<sup>724</sup>. The brain drain also serves as a trailing indicator of Russia's economic potential; its presence demonstrates that Russia does not and can not have a modern, knowledge economy in its current state<sup>725</sup>. Furthermore, the idea of brain drain isn't simply related to the material hardships presented by a corrupt market.

In terms of institutional renewal and Russian human capital levels, brain drain is especially threatening. Brain drain poses a serious threat to Russia's higher education renewal, due to the finest academic talent leaving for better professional opportunities abroad, which could be as much as 30-60% of Russia's "scholarly potential"<sup>726</sup>. The conditions of pay and professional success appeal much more to younger educators than the remaining Soviet elite<sup>727 728</sup>, but the ability of the university system to renew itself remains very much in question. In fact, Russian Ph D's are increasing in quantity but increasingly rejecting careers in academia<sup>729</sup>. Many Russian specialists that spend considerable time in the West actually choose to continue to live abroad due to a perceived lack of corruption instead of material factors alone<sup>730</sup>. The brain drain implications for Russia are especially serious. The Russian Federation must develop and train all of its own human capital, since the labor market does not allow for the attraction of competitive specialists from abroad<sup>731</sup>. The effects of the brain

drain, however, may be mitigated by a dropping level of specialist emigration and the high level of Russian specialists returning to Russia, at a greater rate than either China or India, who greatly contribute to the economy<sup>732</sup>. However, unlike China or India, Russian brain drain is often seen as permanent<sup>733</sup>, which poses greater long-term risks for the country.

### 13.3.3.) Reduced Human Capital Implications

Corruption directly harms human capital formation<sup>734</sup>. Having determined that higher education corruption significantly harms the formation and realization of human capital in the Russian Federation, it is important to look at the larger implications of this trend. Aside from the ongoing examination of corruption being spread via human capital, the primary dangers of flawed human capital production can be realized in two ways. First, human capital implications can be examined via a larger, macroeconomic perspective of the value of human capital in general, including lost potential due to its non-realization. Secondly, an analysis of particularly valuable sectors of the economy that depends on expertise can demonstrate individual impacts. As mentioned in the individual corruption sections, especially accreditation corruption, socially vital areas of an economy will function at dangerously inadequate levels. Institutional strength is considerably dependent on human capital, as are most components of a functional society<sup>735</sup>. Therefore, reductions in human capital cause greater institutional weakness - multiplying the effects of a corrupt and dysfunctional society. This is an especially pertinent implication considering that Russian higher education corruption prevents the production of valuable specialists<sup>736</sup>. While examining such effects, however, it must be remembered that human capital exists in a system throughout the professional life of a worker. Therefore, if a system begins to produce flawed human capital

all of a sudden, existing functional human capital can still be productive until completely replaced, thereby mitigating the overall systemic impacts. In this context, it is important to examine the existing human capital supply, and potential sources of flawed production that may have originated earlier than the beginning of the Putin era.

#### 13.3.3.1.) Ruinous Soviet Legacy

Current and recent Russian human capital are not determined by current higher education alone. Although higher education corruption will affect future human capital, current low levels of human capital can be attributed to a few factors. First of all, Russia inherited a great amount of its current human capital, including that working in the education industry, from the Soviet Union<sup>737</sup>. The effectiveness of the Soviet educational system therefore is being realized in today's economy. This inheritance immediately lost a great deal of its value due to the fundamental changes in Russian society after the fall, and it continued to suffer due to ongoing and overwhelming systemic shocks<sup>738</sup>. Furthermore, the changes in the system created a demand for a completely different type of specialist<sup>739 740</sup>. Qualification and education requirements completely changed, rendering Soviet human capital "not applicable" to the modern Russian economy<sup>741</sup>. Furthermore, the labor market became far more fluid and unstable due to a laborer's ability to switch jobs freely and the highly unpredictable future for many former state enterprises. In another trend, one of the most important blows to the human capital in the Soviet Union was the massive exodus of specialists overseas in the 1990s. Another reason why Soviet human capital suddenly lost its value was a major shift in higher education, which could not meet the demand for new kinds of human capital, nor replace lost productivity<sup>742</sup>. Marxist economics evaporated overnight,

and social sciences that were previously politically sensitive suddenly required a new approach<sup>743 744</sup>. The success of the Soviet system was predicated on producing specialists for an isolated and specific system. By eliminating the monopoly role of the state and exposing this system to a relatively free market, human capital's ability to self-replenish was critically undermined<sup>745</sup>. Unfortunately, the higher education system is still suffering from many of the results of the volatile 1990s.

#### 13.3.3.2.) Full Circle Higher Education Corruption

Higher education is an excellent example of the potential damage done by unrealized human capital potential. In Russia, as in most economies around the world, higher education is provided by those that have themselves received an exceptionally high level of education<sup>746</sup>. In other words, those that have been exposed the longest to higher education then are entrusted to reproduce it. Thus, provided that the proposed implications of corrupt higher education are valid, the area that would see their emergence most vividly would be in new higher education professionals. This can be reflected in the trend that the more a Russian student is exposed to higher education, the more her cultural values reflect those of the society around her<sup>747</sup>. One example of this is the implied reasoning behind the dearth of research on dissertation corruption. According to Osipian, self-protecting academic professionals consciously ignore and suppress research on the subject in order to protect themselves<sup>748</sup>. Furthermore, the prevalence of dissertation and doctoral program corruption implies that many corrupt professionals have found positions in higher educational institutions<sup>749</sup>. In this respect, harmful human capital production is self-renewing. A corrupt higher educational system will reproduce itself via poor teaching quality, the reproduction of a culture of

corruption and reducing the overall value of dissertations<sup>750</sup>. Furthermore, the lack of new academic professionals and the fact that 47% of teachers are at retirement age demonstrates the extent to which the current faculties of many Russian universities still depend on residual Soviet-era human capital<sup>751</sup>. The ability of higher education to replace these professionals, especially the honest ones, is in serious doubt<sup>752</sup>. This unfortunate condition persists in light of the seemingly contradictory phenomenon that increased Ph.D production in Russia does not produce large numbers of academics<sup>753</sup>. A weak educational infrastructure can increase corruption, because weakened education creates weakened institutions and a weakened society overall<sup>754</sup>.

Finally, full-circle corruption can destroy the effectiveness of any institution and further squander human capital potential. Since leadership positions and elite renewal are accomplished through higher education, the production of corrupt or otherwise ineffective professionals would lead to a perpetuation of a corrupt system. In another important way, corruption can reform the incentive structure for graduates, attracting them to corrupt sectors of the economy for rent-seeking and bribery opportunities<sup>755</sup>. Whereas business elites tend to provide education for their children overseas, bureaucrats and government elites' preference for Russian universities renders the Russian education system as a major determinant of future Russian elite composition<sup>756</sup>. In this sense, the best human capital can be squandered via placement of the most promising talent in abusive positions, who then seek to maximize corrupt profits instead of making real contributions to society. This kind of incentivization is entirely understandable, especially when corruption is a very visible means of reliable advancement and enrichment. This could also lead to further institutional harm in the sense

that even capable elites and professionals would willingly restrict the system that they participate in so as to maximize corrupt benefits. This persistently low level of educational quality can have serious effects on a country's human capital rates<sup>757</sup>.

#### 13.3.3.3.) Human Capital's Value

Human capital is a critical part of a modern economy, and damage that it suffers can cause widespread harm. As stated by Alfred Marshall in 1890 - "The most valuable of all capital is that invested in human beings<sup>758</sup>." In specific terms of higher education, the benefits that it presents for increased human capital and economic growth are significant, especially for transition economies<sup>759</sup>. The systemic weaknesses in the Russian economy could be exacerbated by this trend, since human capital is also a source of valuable social capital<sup>760</sup>. For developing economies, human capital is a necessary, but not sufficient prerequisite for significant economic growth<sup>761</sup>, as evidenced by Russia's relatively high international human capital levels, but consistently underperforming economic growth<sup>762</sup>. In fact, human capital is key to the future economic growth and international competitiveness of a country in the modern, globalized economy<sup>763</sup>. This globalized perspective is essential, since even though human capital alone may not be sufficient to ensure economic growth, it is an essential ingredient of a modern country's economic survival in the 20th century<sup>764</sup>. Future returns on current human capital investments in science and technology are very high<sup>765</sup>, which is particularly good for Russia. One of the most promising areas of Russian human capital is the large and competitive IT sector, which could provide significant economic growth if it were ever to be properly developed<sup>766</sup>. Unfortunately, national policy has neglected developing this economic sector in favor of raw materials production, despite



promising developments in Moscow, Saint Petersburg and Novosibirsk - the "Siberian Silicon Valley"<sup>767</sup>." This lack of investment in a primary part of a knowledge economy is telling of the potential implications for a corrupt Russian government human capital policy.

The premier model of future economic development, a "knowledge economy," cannot be achieved with existing Russian human capital policies. Older models of industrial and natural resource wealth are no longer sufficient to ensure long-term economic growth, since although production potential is important, the widespread use of knowledge will be the primary determinant of twenty-first century economic effectiveness<sup>768</sup>. This goal is evaluated in terms of a specific kind of human capital, which is produced from higher education. The Russian educational system can ensure basic literacy and numeracy, but more sophisticated specialists are not commonly produced by the higher education system. This has resulted in an unfortunate situation where the Russian Federation needs to import many of its specialists<sup>769</sup>, since most specialists produced by the Russian higher education system are do not meet human capital needs<sup>770</sup>. Although the Russian economy is growing, this does not justify human capital development policies, since this was mostly due to favorable market prices for raw materials exports<sup>771</sup>. Furthermore, Russian human capital development is neglected by policymakers, even though it certainly requires state policy solutions to be successfully realized<sup>772</sup>. This further complicates overall Russian economic development, since increased growth creates an increased need for human capital - thereby exacerbating shortages and limiting competitiveness<sup>773</sup>. This difficult situation can lead to a further reduction of human capital due to the primacy of human capital intensive technologies in the

global market<sup>774</sup>. A lack of major human capital production in such a crucial economic sector demonstrates how the private sector could suffer from a lack of focused state involvement.

Human capital is particularly valuable for the Russian private sector. It has been argued that the only truly unique resource that any business could claim is its human capital<sup>775</sup>. This would explain why many firms seek to develop their own human capital reserves via serious training initiatives. The advantages to developing this asset are numerous, especially in the area of improved organizational performance and overall productivity<sup>776</sup>. In fact, the critical ability of any organization to transform or adapt to an ever-changing market is provided by developed human capital<sup>777</sup>. Therefore, advanced human capital development is essential for the survival of Russia's private sector<sup>778</sup>. It should be noted that Russian firms' human capital development policies do not often aim at long-term development, but merely adapting workers and managers to their current tasks - compensating for shortcomings in education<sup>779</sup>. Considering this approach, it is doubtful as to whether current Russian private training initiatives could achieve the long-term economic growth promised by a knowledge economy. This troubling situation is further complicated by the effects of corruption on human capital potential.

Human capital and societal corruption are fundamentally opposed concepts. Low levels of human capital can directly lead to increased corruption<sup>780</sup>. In terms of regulating corruption, human capital is a critical source of institutional strength<sup>781</sup>. Poor governance also leads to less effective human capital investment and less effective policies in this regard<sup>782</sup>. From another perspective, developing human capital is a way reducing poverty and inequality<sup>783</sup>, which could correspondingly alleviate inequality as a cause of corruption,

according to Uslaner's model. This implication is doubly important for the Russian Federation, since potential a loss of human capital means not only a loss of current competitiveness, but an ongoing inability to successfully adapt to a constantly changing global economy. The overall functioning of a state and the value of a nation's economy are therefore both undermined by corruption and enhanced by human capital. This effect is enhanced by the tendency of human capital to produce gains in other forms of capital<sup>784</sup>. In this context, human capital and corruption can be seen as related and mutually exclusive extremes of societal development, where the presence of one mitigates the other. Therefore, corruption in the Russian higher educational system, as a means of increasing corruption and reducing human capital, represents a multifaceted danger to the Federation's economic and social health.

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- 363 Эхо Москвы Podcast - "Родительское собрание" - Oct 04, 2009 - 33:00
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- 371 Эхо Москвы Podcast - "Лукавая цифра" - Jul 22, 2009 - 29:30
- 372 Эхо Москвы Podcast - "Польный Альбац" - Aug 30, 2009 - 9:15, 40:30
- 373 Эхо Москвы Podcast - "Родительское собрание" - Aug 23, 2009 - 10:45
- 374 Эхо Москвы Podcast - "Родительское собрание" - Mar 15, 2009 - 30:30
- 375 Эхо Москвы Podcast - "Польный Альбац" - Aug 30, 2009 - 27:30
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